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Understanding through narrative inquiry : storying a national writing project initiative.

Amy Renee Vujaklija
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<https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/2466>

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UNDERSTANDING THROUGH NARRATIVE INQUIRY:
STORYING A NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT INITIATIVE

By

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B.A., University of Kentucky, 1994

M.A.T., Spalding University, 2004

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the

College of Education and Human Development of the University of Louisville

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction

Department of Middle and Secondary Education

University of Louisville

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2016

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A Dissertation Approved on

March 28, 2016

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated
to my husband David
and our children Nick, Emma, Elisabeth, and Nathan.
Your support and encouragement
make me proud to be a wife and mother.
A warm thank you also goes to my parents and in-laws
who made me realize who I could become.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my adviser Dr. Penny Howell for the guidance she has provided during the many months of writing and from the beginning of my doctoral program. With her encouragement, support, and great words of wisdom (“The goal is to finish.”) I was able write, rewrite, and rewrite. I would also like to acknowledge my committee members Dr. Lori Norton-Meier, Dr. James Chisholm, and Dr. Caroline Sheffield. Dr. Norton-Meier has also been with me since I began my doctoral studies and taught me to inquire in a way that has opened my mind to the creativity in research. Dr. Chisholm has pushed my analytical thinking to new levels through discussion and questioning. Dr. Sheffield has provided me with different insights into the world of teaching and researching.

My family members deserve acknowledgment for the sacrifices and extra responsibilities my studies have placed on their shoulders. My husband entrusted me with creative work decisions that allowed me to engage in wonderful teaching and researching experiences. A shout out goes to my daughter Emma who began a career in babysitting when I started back to school. Her help in the early years of my program enabled me to take evening classes and know everyone would be okay. And to Elisabeth and Nathan, you will soon see that there is “life after student” for your mom.

ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING THROUGH NARRATIVE INQUIRY: STORYING A NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT INITIATIVE

Amy Vujaklija

March 28, 2016

This narrative inquiry study informed the understanding of a professional development planning process within the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative sponsored by the Literacy Design Collaborative. Because little has been written about teacher-leaders in the roles of planning professional development for colleagues, this narrative inquiry used the three dimensions of situation, continuity, and interaction (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Dewey, 1938) to explore interviews, large and small group meeting recordings, and email communications among leadership team members during an initiative to plan professional development.

Qualitative data analysis included coding of attributes, process, in vivo, and patterns (Saldaña, 2013). Pattern coding became the foundation for the narrative mode of analysis in which narrative smoothing occurred (Polkinghorne, 1995). Situations along the initiative time-line became short stories of the larger initiative narrative.

Findings revealed that back-talk (Schön, 1983), the disruptions in the narrative, included fear of new leadership, anxiety about successful professional development implementation, negotiations of professional development planning, and tensions caused

by grant deliverables. Participants navigated back-talk by gaining trust in their own abilities, in each other's investment and intelligence, and in the focus of the initiative. One aspect of building trust came in the form invitations indicating that leaders and participants would work alongside each other. Another aspect of trust came through the empowerment of students' voices to highlight the importance of creating meaningful writing assignments.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROCESS AND PROBLEM

Trust the Process

Teachers like me seeking to improve our professional practice reflect upon and inquire within our art and craft of classroom instruction. The National Writing Project (NWP) advocates teachers teaching teachers as the support for professional and student learning (National Writing Project, 2016) with a central focus on inquiring into one's own reading and writing practice, both professionally and personally. I first learned about the organization's mission and vision during the summer of 2011 when the Louisville Writing Project, an NWP local site, introduced me to a series of eye-opening, mind-shifting, life-changing experiences, showing a seven-year veteran teacher how much more I needed to learn about writing, teaching, and leading.

One common experience among all Writing Project sites centers around the demonstration of a teaching writing practice or strategy. Through writing, peer feedback, revision, and mini-conference presentation, the demonstration pulls the teacher-writer up by the bootstraps and pushes the Writing Project Invitational Summer Institute participant to new levels of reflection and inquiry. At the time, this new idea of teacher peer response contrasted with my seven years of experiencing administrator formative and

summative evaluation. Unlike assessment of skills, peer feedback created new avenues for thinking through questioning, evidenced by this journal entry:

There are many areas that can be improved without a doubt. I definitely understand the questions people asked about transitions in the presentation. They were confused about when they needed to ‘be the student’ and when to reflect on that practice ‘as the teacher learner.’ (journal entry, June 16, 2011)

This new thinking was visible in one of my demo revision action steps: “I need to form a bridge to the writing and show the next step” (journal entry, June 16, 2011). As I came to learn, the Writing Project mission is to build an accessible bridge to writing and enlist teachers as leaders in this work.

Designing a demonstration presentation, writing personal pieces, giving and receiving feedback, and experiencing varied writing invitations—all within a writing workshop environment—became tesserae in my picture of teacher leadership. At the end of the 2011 Louisville Writing Project Invitational Summer Institute, I wrote this reflection:

It’s the last day of June and the last day of the summer institute. I’m not sure how I feel about that. Sure, I’m ready to not drive almost two hours a day, and it will be nice to sleep in—maybe clean my house. But it seems like there is so much left to do. We’ll be meeting throughout the year and that will keep us connected, focused on our mission to be leaders in our schools. I do hope there is the possibility for that for me—at least in a small way. (journal entry, June 30, 2011)

I yearned for leadership roles, but I became a learner before I became a leader. I continued working with the local Writing Project and the National Writing Project after that summer of 2011. By involving myself in the Writing Project meetings for grant work around the Common Core State Standards, I received an invitation to become a member of the grant travel team. As a leader, I found I still had much to learn (Collinson, 2012). My reply to this invitation—“I would love the opportunity to go with

you to Colorado! Tell me what you need me to do . . . I'll collect as much student work as I can before school lets out" (personal communication, May 5, 2012)—destined me to meet a network of teachers from across the nation who had also responded to an invitation from the National Writing Project. Jenny, another travel team member and a later leadership team member with me on the initiative written about in this study, reminded me of how that invitation felt. She said during a conversation we had in early 2016, "I'm sure you felt this same way when you did LDC. I just remember feeling so honored that [my director] would think of me."

"Honored" as well as acknowledged became the fuel that fed my professional growth in teaching writing. My history sounded like other Writing Project teachers who became leadership team members in the most recent initiative. Since being a part of the Invitational Summer Institute in June 2011, National Writing Project and Kentucky Writing Project initiatives have intrigued me in the way the professional development workshops, conference presentations, summer academies, and institutes continuously change my thinking and teaching. Every experience has taught me more about using constant reflection and inquiry as part of my teaching practice. In an email communication to my curriculum director a little over a year after being involved in various projects, I shared this learning:

Students take ownership of their knowledge by finding answers to their inquiry questions and demonstrating that knowledge in creative, innovative ways. I would like to suggest that our language arts teachers could take ownership of their knowledge of the Common Core by having the choice to individually or by partnerships create integrated reading/writing units using the LDC [Literacy Design Collaborative] module format for different sections of the pacing calendar. They are three to four week units. Nothing before my own experience of doing this (besides reading professional literature) has deepened my knowledge of what the Common Core expects our students to do and achieve. (personal communication, November 18, 2012)

Unfortunately, the process of professional learning and leading through workshop models can be at odds with the mandated trainings, structured routines, and stressful accountability of a district K-12 school setting, as I have often witnessed. Teachers like me wanting to continue our professional growth by developing our own voices might be stifled by the authoritative discourse of administration within our schools.

The National Writing Project, on the other hand, invites us to pursue leadership roles, assisting and honoring the development of our professional voices. I received an invitation from the NWP coordinator to be on the leadership team for a new Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) initiative to extend the work of a previous one. Formerly funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the LDC is a “national community of educators providing a teacher-designed and research-proven framework, online tools, and resources for creating literacy-rich assignments and courses across content areas” (Literacy Design Collaborative, 2016). My previous experiences with NWP initiatives prepared me for what I knew would include traveling to meetings and conferences, designing sessions with other teaching professionals, and enriching my classroom perspectives with points-of-view from across the nation.

For this initiative, the task was bigger than previous endeavors. The leadership team would be charged with designing professional development and reaching one thousand educators within an eighteen-month time frame. As I prepared my acceptance, I wondered how planning professional development as part of this leadership team might look different from other types of professional development or planning experiences. This invitation prompted me to ask about professional development planning in this unique context. Originally interested in how this study might reveal reflective inquiry in

action through our reflecting back to plan forward, I realized that the collective story of the leadership team would narrate the larger context of professional development planning within which reflective inquiry was only one part.

Entering the National Writing Project initiative leadership team as a participant-observer, I could not know for certain that our grant work involving professional development planning would be successful. I could only rely on my previous experiences with National Writing Project networks to guide me, and those experiences always benefited me and the people around me in our professional growth as teachers and personally as writers. This journey with the Writing Project began the summer of 2011 and continues to shape my lens as a researcher.

The Louisville Writing Project director told me several years ago—even before the 2011 Summer Institute—to “trust the process!” (meeting notes, April 16, 2011). At the time, those words seemed important, but I had no way of knowing how important they would become. Years later, trusting the process included more than drafting a narrative in class with my students; it was also the learning process in which new experiences layered upon and enhanced or possibly replaced the old. Trust also meant believing in the value of the work. The process could only come to fruition if people were invested, which meant trusting that each person on the team had equal levels of commitment to the initiative goal. Trust was multifaceted, as this initiative showed. As a participant-observer, I saw the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative as a collective narrative that began to reveal why leadership team members made the decisions we did in our personal and professional pathways to leadership development through the planning of professional learning. National Writing Project leaders and

facilitators sought ways to “trust the process.” This narrative inquiry study attempts to tell that story.

Statement of Problem

Students depend on the quality of teaching for meaningful educational experiences (Wood, 2010). Kennedy (2010) argued that

Children's levels of motivation, engagement, and sense of self-efficacy are instrumental in determining the extent to which they will engage in literacy activities both inside and outside of school and, as such, exert a powerful influence on their academic achievement. (p. 1)

Quality teaching can motivate students to become more engaged in the learning process.

Engaging students requires teachers to rethink their teaching identities. Lewis and Fabos (2005) said, "Our identities shape and are shaped by what counts as knowledge, who gets to make it, who receives it" (p. 474). Teachers can use “the tension(s) of inquiry to take risks, think differently, or take on new identities” (Scherff, 2012, p. 218). Educational experiences, facilitated by teachers who have mastered the art and science of teaching and who take risks learning to do so, impact students at deeper levels than what is seen on the surface in the classrooms.

Reading and writing allow students to investigate content knowledge more deeply; unfortunately, the focus on breadth of content knowledge as opposed to depth has kept literacy instruction confined to English classrooms. Applebee and Langer (2006, 2009, 2011) wrote extensively of the state of writing instruction and cautioned that the long avoidance of writing in the content areas pre-twentieth century would make it difficult for educators to re-incorporate writing into the curriculum. Ten years later, writing accountability creates an urgency barely noticeable before, even though researchers have discussed the need for effective literacy strategy implementation for

years. With the public reporting of achievement scores on standards-based standardized tests, schools vie in a competitive slap-down for prime spots at the top. Catalysts for change often come from external sources such as standards, test scores, administrators, or evaluative tools, resulting in teachers seeking a prescription for fixing whatever might be broken (Webster-Wright, 2009), perpetuating a deficit perspective of teaching. As one response to the “broken” literacy instruction across the country, the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010), approved in forty-two states, infuse literacy into all content areas.

The deficit perspective of teaching and teachers has shifted the current focus from student and teacher learning to teacher effectiveness. As a result, “teacher quality” as a means of improving student achievement continues to be a contested issue in today’s education news evidenced by over 12 million hits on a Google news search conducted January 29, 2016. The headline “Study: Targeted Teacher Turnover Boosts Teacher Quality, Student Achievement” (Booren, 2016) topped the day’s search. Everyone vested in education—parents, legislatures, universities, administrators, and teachers—suggests ways to improve teacher education and training as a means of bettering student achievement on assessments, the most tangible means of identifying student learning.

Teacher and administrator investment in professional development has traditionally offered access to improving classroom management, technology skills, content knowledge, and instructional strategies. State agencies such as the Kentucky General Assembly (2010) recognize the importance of teachers’ ongoing education and have laws in place to ensure these hours are fulfilled, as this statute details:

[Professional development] shall include programs that: address the goals for Kentucky schools as stated in KRS 158.6451, including reducing the achievement

gaps as determined by an equity analysis of the disaggregated student performance data from the state assessment program developed under KRS 158.6453; engage educators in effective learning processes and foster collegiality and collaboration; and provide support for staff to incorporate newly acquired skills into their work through practicing the skills, gathering information about the results, and reflecting on their efforts. (KRS 156.095, 2010)

Yet even with state statutes defining professional development as a collaborative learning process, administration-down dissemination of research reports has become a common mode of training. Teachers, as their personal accounts and researcher discoveries attest, dislike dissemination because it limits teacher voice, engagement in inquiry, and access to primary documents and experiences (Martinovic et al., 2012) and implies lack of trust in their professional voices. Accountability systems, training, and non-instructional demands from teachers limit time available for essential professional learning that can be acquired through inquiry (Stillman, 2011) and the time it would take to trust the learning process.

Schools attempt to offer support for their teachers in order to attain high stakes goals, but administrators may not always agree on the best form this should take. The debate over best teaching practices has continued to be politically turbulent (Delpit, 1988; Hinchman & Moore, 2013; Zemelman, Daniels, & Bizar, 1999), and stakeholders including policymakers, administrators, parents, and community members make it necessary for teachers to mediate their “personal understandings, values, and commitments . . . [around the] contested social practice of teaching” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002, p. 405). Teachers, also stakeholders in education, often do not have seats at the discussion table where their personal understandings might add value to the conversation about best teaching practices. The purpose of education has consistently been to assist children in their development as individual learners who are part of a larger community

of people. But perhaps more importantly, education can help students as well as those who teach them to see inside themselves, to reach reserves allowing them to better serve their communities.

Studies tell us that effective professional development sessions or programs focus narrowly on specific content, engage teachers in inquiry-based learning, model teaching strategies, connect to classroom work, allow collective participation, provide adequate time for activities, invite teacher voice and input, and encourage reflection (Borko, 2004; Capps, Crawford, & Constanas, 2012; Chamberlin, 2009; Fielder, 2010; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). Teacher-selected effective professional development focusing on specific literacy practices would offer the choice that teachers seek, literacy support administrators want to give, and meaningful classroom work students need.

To help teachers in their search for intentional and meaningful classroom instruction, the NWP Invitational Summer Institute focuses on educational research and best instructional practices through professional readings, discussion, and demonstrations. Through the “intentional and complex design” (National Writing Project ISI, 2016) of the 3-5 week Writing Project Invitational Summer Institutes, participants develop their voices as professionals, researchers, and writers as they train for leadership roles. Teachers learn to become trusted teacher consultants through the process of practicing their skills during demonstration sessions. For these summer weeks, teachers engage in changing their roles from student to participant to leader. The National Writing Project model encourages, indeed expects and trusts, teachers to conduct their own inquiries into effective classroom practices and share findings with their colleagues.

In larger spaces such as the initiative of this study, the National Writing Project calls upon teacher-leaders to become part of larger leadership roles.

Although much has been determined about the characteristics of effective professional developments and leadership development, little has been said about the teacher-leaders who plan professional development sessions. Planning professional learning experiences to include all or even most of the identified qualities of effective professional development would necessarily require vision and responsiveness. In order to create engaging experiences for fellow teachers, teacher-leaders acting as professional development planners must identify specific focus areas in line with schools' needs and develop interactive workshops to make learning long-term and genuine. Leadership team members' negotiations of selecting specific focus areas and methods of instruction has the potential to affect their interactions and their own professional learning in rich, meaningful ways and needs better understanding.

This study was situated within an initiative to plan professional development in literacy, particularly in the creation of effective writing assignments across content areas. This initiative met the leadership team members' intrinsic needs to respond to educational shifts (Wagner & French, 2010) and sought to address the theoretical underpinnings of classroom practice, the best practices for instruction, and how to implement these practices in the classroom. In the same tradition of recommendations (Kaplan, Chan, Farbman, & Novoryta, 2014), studies (Drits, 2011; Horn & Little, 2010; Mockler, 2014; Stephenson, Dada, & Harold, 2012), literature reviews (Warford, 2011), and initiatives (Wood, 2010) the Assignments Matter initiative leadership team members, which were

the focus of this study, planned professional development with the intention of influencing teacher learning.

In light of the pressures teachers face, we should be pushing conversations beyond the basics of professional learning to those of leadership, especially in the planning of professional development for colleagues and others. Because each professional development opportunity must meet the highest expectations of quality and demonstrate long-term learning (Borko, 2004; Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010), teachers answering the call to plan professional learning opportunities for their peers should understand the value of time and the effectiveness of interactive instruction. Stepping into planning roles potentially allows teacher-leaders to respond sensitively and sensibly to the needs of our fellow teachers (Ben-Peretz, Kleeman, Reichenberg, & Shimoni, 2010; Fielder, 2010). A “teachers teaching teachers” model recognized and advocated by the National Writing Project relies on teacher-leaders learning the fundamental elements of effective professional development and devoting time to plan professional development sessions for our peers.

Situated within this demand for teacher-leaders and this call to plan professional development as a leadership team, this initiative offered the opportunity to follow a timeline of professional development planning. The goal of this study was to step inside the planning of an initiative to see how a leadership team might address these professional development goals and how Writing Project site representatives (liaisons) might implement them.

Narrative Inquiry Theoretical Framework

Understanding the Initiative

Dewey (1938) thought narratively when he expressed the trouble of whether “freedom is to be thought of and adjudged on the basis of relatively momentary incidents or whether its meaning is found in the continuity of developing experience” (p. 43). He described the individual’s existence as being a series of situations, in other words his or her continuity. Calling Dewey “foundational . . . in [their] thinking about narrative inquiry,” Clandinin and Connelly used the terms *personal* and *social*; *place*; and *past*, *present*, and *future* (2000, p. 50, italics in original) in their application of Dewey’s concepts of interaction, situation, and continuity. They went on to say: “This set of terms creates a metaphorical *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along a third” (2000, p. 50, italics in original). For this study, I decided to implement a narrative inquiry framework built upon Dewey’s original terms of situation, interaction, and continuity to examine this three-dimensional inquiry space.

While residing in the world of situations (time, place, and space), people interact with one another. Situations influence and often complicate these interactions; yet, interactions also determine how that situation is experienced. These layered experiences form continuity, defined as a series of situations. Kim (2016) stated:

When we narrative inquirers understand the theory of experience in relation to these two principles of continuity and interaction, we think of our participant’s experience in continuity of the past, present, and future, not in a linear but circular or even rhizomatic way. We consider the participant’s interaction with his or her situation or environment, which includes the interaction with the researcher. (p. 71)

As participant-observer within the study and a leadership team member, I considered how my interactions with participants affected situations along the initiative time-line.

A closer look at situation drew in Schön's (1983) work with reflection-in-action, which positioned the reflective practitioner as part of a situation and its back-talk, which here can be defined as confusions or disruptions within a situation. Situations within the Assignments Matter initiative involved how to plan an initiative roll-out, how to implement professional development at Writing Project sites, and how to become invested in the work and in each other, any of which could possibly disrupt the narrative. Individuals who respond and act upon the back-talk in a situation, the disruptions, could influence or change future situations and potentially shape their own ideologies.

As the researcher-participant, I used narrative inquiry with the dimensions of situation, interaction, and continuity to examine and understand the planning process within the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative. Situated within these dimensions were the leadership team members, Writing Project site representatives (liaisons), and the Writing Project director of programs.

Telling the Story

While Dewey's theory of experience helped me understand what was happening in the initiative, Bakhtin's (1981) theory of novelness helped me figure out how to tell the story. Because the initiative was not a "single, unified point of view" (Kim, 2016, p. 72), the three elements of novelness guided the interpretation of findings as novel-like. I relied on Kim's (2016) interpretation and discussed Bakhtin's (1981) explanation to unpack the three elements of polyphony, chronotope, and carnival.

Polyphony refers to “different voices including the author’s [being] heard without having one voice privileged over the others” (Kim, 2016, p. 74). This element guided my interpretation of self as one voice among many within the initiative. Any perceived hierarchy among the director, leadership team members, liaisons, and professional development workshop participants became equalized when all voices were heard.

Chronotope, as defined by Bakhtin (1981) is “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships . . . [that] expresses the inseparability of space and time” (p. 84). Furthermore, he described the meaning chronotopes have for the novel. He said, “They are the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events of the novel. The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied” (p. 250). Through the course of the initiative, situations and interactions were seen to have temporal and spatial relationships that were disrupted by knots. These “knots of narrative” became the “fundamental narrative events” that alerted me to the back-talk within situations, and which I reported as findings.

Carnival is a “laying-bare any sort of conventionality, the exposure of all that is vulgar and falsely stereotyped in human relationships” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 162). Kim (2016) explained this concept as that in “which everyone is an active participant, openness is celebrated, hierarchy is invisible, and norms are reversed” (p. 76). Carnival works alongside polyphony to not only reveal the different voices in the narrative but to question power relationships that might be present. Throughout the initiative, different power relationships were questioned and at times upended.

Research Questions and Objectives

Researchers should consider how professional learning both inside and outside the classroom empowers teachers and creates a positive learning environment for the students (Applebee & Langer, 2011; de Vries, van de Grift, & Jansen, 2013; Fielder, 2010). This study took a further step outside the classroom to investigate the planning behind that professional learning.

My first research focus explored the role of narrative inquiry to understand the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative. Through this focus, I brought to light professional learning and how teacher-leaders responded to the professional development planning process. I sought for greater understanding by studying concepts that emerged from meeting recordings, interviews, and online posts through the narrative inquiry dimensions of situation, interaction, and continuity.

My second research focus explored what disrupted the initiative narrative. Teacher-leader stories and interviews provided insight to existing situations and teachers' motivation for engaging in leadership opportunities beyond their school and district roles. Individual contexts and the fear of new and unfamiliar learning and leading were discovered through large and small group meetings, personal interviews, and correspondence and became the collective story that highlighted situations' back-talk and how back-talk was navigated.

These questions guided my research on the initiative leadership team's planning process:

1. How does narrative inquiry inform our understanding of a National Writing Project initiative to plan professional development?

2. What disrupts the narrative of a National Writing Project initiative to plan professional development?

The National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative (<http://assignmentsmatter.nwp.org/>) moved the critical conversations among teachers from the student work to the writing tasks that prompted the work. This study sought to understand the planning of a National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative and revealed the decisions leadership team members made as we considered the learning objectives for participants and planned an invitational platform for open and difficult conversations. Necessarily, leadership team members had to have our own difficult discussions as we navigated the language of the initiative and the scale of its impact.

Organization of Study

In Chapter One, I included my introduction as researcher in the role of participant-observer. I also stated the central problem that prompted this study. This chapter described the theoretical framework and the rationale for displaying the findings in narrative form. Finally, I explained my research objectives and related research questions.

In Chapter Two, I discuss the literature about professional development and information about the National Writing Project professional development model. Further, I examine the literature surrounding reflective inquiry and discuss back-talk's role in the narrative inquiry framework used in this study.

In Chapter Three, methods are discussed. Explained are the research design, the context of the study, and the research questions. Detailed descriptions of the data

sources, collection, and analysis are included, as well as the narrative development of the data.

In Chapter Four, I organize the data findings in a seven-part series of mini-narrative situations. Each situation includes its narrative inquiry framework description, codes used, the narrative, and the back-talk within the situation. At the conclusion of Chapter Four, I look across these situations in a cross-situation analysis section.

In Chapter Five, I summarize the study and discuss its implications. Furthermore, I explain the trustworthiness of the study and propose possible future research. To close, I story myself as a budding researcher.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE

The following sections describe professional development planning and the National Writing Project's mission and vision for effective professional development, the professional development elements of inquiry and reflective inquiry, and back-talk or disruptions in narratives. The literature created the space to study how narrative inquiry functioned as a descriptive method for understanding professional development planning in the context of the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative.

Professional Development

Teacher self-efficacy strongly impacts students' performance in the classroom (Lee, Cawthon, & Dawson, 2013). Kennedy's (2010) findings in a two-year longitudinal mixed-methods study of literacy intervention with in-school professional development and learning communities showed teacher efficacy rose in response to improved student achievement. Early incremental successes in that program strengthened teachers' commitment to the work and "built teachers' own self-efficacy in their ability to address challenges and dramatically improve achievement" (Kennedy, 2010, p. 5).

Studies also showed that students' self-efficacy in writing, especially in response to teachers' feedback, affected their motivation and performance on writing tasks (Cohen, 2011; Pajares, Johnson, & Usher 2007; Smith & Wilhelm, 2004). Teachers, however,

may be uncomfortable with the feedback process that can push student achievement to higher levels (Knipper & Duggan, 2006). It is a relevant question to ask how teachers' self-efficacy in both writing and the feedback process affects their implementation of literacy strategies in the content areas and what kinds of support they themselves might need.

One goal of professional development in education may be to bridge the gaps among teacher content knowledge, new pedagogy, and student achievement. Studies indicated that professional development is most effective when long-term and situated within teacher contexts of instruction (Borko, 2004), as well as collaborative and focused on grade- and content-specific learning (Fielder, 2010). In a technical report sponsored by The Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson (2010) summarized previous research on effective professional development stating:

For professional development to have a significant impact on teaching practice and on student learning, it needs to be intensive; sustained over time; embedded in teachers' day-to-day work in schools; related directly to teachers' work with students; able to engage teachers in active learning of the content to be taught and how to teach that content; coherent with district policies related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and structured to regularly engage teachers in local professional learning communities where problems of practice are solved through collaboration. (p. 38)

The more closely a professional development learning opportunity resembles a teacher's actual classroom experience, the more likely there will be continuing application of the new strategy (or concept or plan) learned in the professional development (Putnam & Borko, 2000) and the more engaged teachers will be in the learning process.

Sallee's (2011) dissertation findings showed that participants in schools categorized as "distinguished" were more likely to experience and implement the

effective professional development described in such reports, suggesting a correlation between professional development and high student achievement. Likewise, Liu, Lee, and Linn (2010) found similar results generated from a study including forty teachers in five states and over 4,500 students in which “both workshop attendance and having a partner teacher had a positive impact on student science achievement” (p. 814).

Generally, all schools strive for “distinguished” status and teachers need support and time as they learn strategies appropriate for their content areas. As Smeets and Ponte (2009) found in a case study of twelve teachers, schools often do not have the designated time for teachers to gather and analyze data, making the teacher identification of their own and students’ needs that much more challenging.

One need that studies reported is in teaching writing, particularly argument writing (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, & Wilkinson, 2004; Graham & Perin, 2007; Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Kiuvara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009; Newell, Beach, Smith, VanDerHeide, Kuhn, & Andriessen, 2011; Rogers & Graham, 2008), posing particular problems for the forty-two states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) that have adopted the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010; <http://www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/>). These standards establish expectations for interweaving literacy practices, especially argument, in all content-area instruction. Infusing writing into the content-area classrooms is problematic for teachers not trained in teaching writing; therefore, organizations such as the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development supporting the National Institute for Literacy (NIH, DHHS, 2010) say teachers “need information on

how to incorporate effective literacy learning strategies into the content-area curriculum” (p. 39). Teachers who do not feel well-prepared to teach writing or who have limited understanding of content area literacy may focus solely on disciplinary content and not on the literacy skills necessary to read and write in that content area. Gray areas exist between where reports state students should be and how teachers are to get them there. This current narrative inquiry study focused on the planning of an initiative targeting the need for effective professional development in writing instruction, specifically the creation of meaningful writing assignments, as one strategy for helping teachers get students where they need to be.

Indeed, teachers who have stronger student-centered beliefs compared to content-centered beliefs are more likely to participate in continued learning, reflection, and collaboration (de Vries, van de Grift, & Jansen, 2013), particularly relevant for leadership team members who voluntarily accept roles to plan learning opportunities for other teachers. De Vries, van de Grift, and Jansen (2013) recommended professional development that would provide an intervention of sorts for teachers to engage in reflection and action research to enhance their student-centered beliefs. However, while they supported the notion of student-centered instruction, they did not include students’ voices as a way to widen teachers’ perspectives as this study did through a student feedback panel.

Another potential problem is that single modes of writing become the fallback for many teachers. Kihara, Graham, and Hawken (2009) found that language arts teachers were naturally more inclined to have their students write in a variety of genres beyond traditional book or lab reports, but the push for multi-modal and digital writing requires

all content area teachers to be involved in such tasks (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Hicks & Turner, 2013; Graham & Harris, 2013; Jewitt, 2008). Teaching resources crowd online spaces, but without a system in place for processing the information or professional development planning to address the content area and multi-modal needs for writing instruction, teachers can become quickly submerged under a tide of “research-based” strategies.

Teachers need ongoing support in their learning beyond the professional development based on district mandates. These district mandates sometimes limit the options available to facilitators, as Fielder (2010) found in her grounded theory dissertation study of thirty-one teachers and five facilitators to understand teachers’ attitudes about professional development. High-stakes accountability often dictates the type of professional development schools offer, making individual teacher inquiry challenging (Cordova, Hudson, Swank, Matthiesen, & Bertels, 2009). However, the spirit of the new standards requires a critical lens and an openness to inquiry and dialogue (National Governors Association for Best Practices, 2010), highlighting what Freire (1970) said about the two sides of dialogue:

The word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible . . . within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed—even in part—the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world. (p. 68)

The true word, spoken and unspoken, may also represent the ideologies at the center of teacher-leaders’ calling. New teachers, particularly vulnerable to the pressures of balancing content knowledge, classroom management, and standards, “claim a powerful,

important sense of agency” when they engage in inquiry (Bieler & Thomas, 2009, p. 1060).

Ongoing teacher inquiry and collaboration in professional learning communities designed around specific focus areas have been shown to positively affect student achievement (Galligan, 2011; Parsons, Metzger, Askew, & Carswell, 2011) and increase reflective teaching practices (Shosh & Zales, 2005). The initiative of this study incorporated an interactive workshop for teachers to provide feedback to each other, which introduced a strategy for building teacher confidence in a collaborative setting. The collaborative support between a researcher and learning communities as well as the increased teacher efficacy resulting from incremental classroom successes (Kennedy, 2010) set up a model for investigating the effects of small collaborative successes in professional development planning.

Planners of professional development program in literacy seek to develop an “ideal curriculum” that “honors the autonomy of teacher educators, and their ability to reflect on their practices and to integrate these with theoretical frameworks” (Ben-Peretz, Kleeman, Reichenberg, & Shimoni, 2010, p. 125). Professional development providers within school settings work with teachers to enhance their current skills and to assist them in selecting singular focus areas for short and long-term improvements. Institutes with follow-up sessions and professional learning communities with regular meetings offer the types of long-term supports defined by researchers and the National Staff Development Council as “professional development” (Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010). In cross-disciplinary professional learning communities built on the backbone of effective professional development described by Borko (2004), teachers

learn from one another in consistent, well-defined, clearly-specified programs. Inquiring into the planning of an effective professional development that moves away from the school-setting model could reveal expanded models of effectiveness. Such an inquiry could also reveal how planning meaningful professional development might itself be its own meaningful experience.

Even though communities of practice with writing strategies at the center of discussion could help teachers feel more comfortable with writing in general, early research on teacher communities showed their development as difficult and time-consuming (Borko, 2004 citing Grossman et al., 2001 and Stein et al., 1999). With collaboration, however, teacher cohorts can work together as discourse communities within university-district partnerships, summer institutes, even stand-alone professional developments, or school departments to enhance their learning and connect learning to their school contexts, which opens opportunities for both leading and learning (Collinson, 2012; Donnelly et al., 2005; Putnam & Borko, 2000). In their theory development for teacher-educators, Ben-Peretz, Kleeman, Reichenberg, and Shimoni (2010) found “professional development must involve reflection, narrative inquiries, case studies and self-studies . . . Social learning communities of practice promote support, gaining richer outlooks, developing openness for new ideas and learning new practices” (p. 122). They did not, however, inquire into the planning of such professional development that would consider these new ideas and learning practices.

Further, researchers theorized that professional communities should be formed whereby “educators share experiences, elaborate on their meanings, exchange professional knowledge and ideas and let their professional identities emerge naturally,”

which demonstrates care for teacher growth (Ben-Peretz, Kleeman, Reichenberg, and Shimoni, 2010, p. 123). Importantly, teachers’ “greatest enjoyment appears to come from working with colleagues who, like themselves, love learning and are committed to helping students learn” (Collinson, 2012). Further, Nelson, Slavit, and Deuel (2012) found in their case study of six professional learning communities that teachers collaboratively “build on each other’s comments, questions, and actions. They make implicit or explicit efforts to elicit and understand each other’s ideas and values, and they seek to develop common understandings grounded in experience and evidence” (p. 25). In other words, these teachers worked from a stance of negotiation. Inquiring into the negotiation within a professional learning community that brought teacher-leaders from different states together extended the reach of the study by Nelson, Slavit, and Deuel (2012). As well, the investigation of teacher-leaders planning professional development introduced another aspect to the development and purpose of a professional learning community.

National Writing Project Professional Development Model

John Dewey (1910), an educational theorist, recommended teachers become a community of learners, but working together does not create a community unless the people are working toward a common goal. Because of the importance of having a common goal, the National Writing Project (2016) focuses on writing instruction with a network vision of “teachers teaching teachers,” which is a much-preferred avenue for learning for most teachers (Collinson, 2012). In this model, teachers isolate a classroom literacy practice during their initial work in the Invitational Summer Institute. Through feedback and workshops, they develop that practice as a demonstration in a presentation

or workshop setting for other teachers (National Writing Project ISI, 2016). The presenters show colleagues the classroom practice and invite workshop participants to adapt the practice for their own classrooms. If, as Dewey (1910) said, language gains meaning through shared activity, the teacher who has "been there" might be able to speak in a language that has more meaning to a fellow teacher than another, more removed voice would. The workshop-style approach of National Writing Project professional development speaks the common language of the classroom teacher.

Also integral to the National Writing Project model of professional development is writing. Teachers in professional development sessions participate in "writing into the day," reflections, and other writing activities. Writing provides a "window" into the process of teacher development, and reflection "creates an imaginary dialogic partner with oneself to make meaning of practical experiences" (Warford, 2011, p. 256). The National Writing Project model embeds time for teachers to reflect about their classroom practices and investigate writing strategies, digital writing tools, and literacy standards. The process of investigation through active participation prompts teachers to think of themselves as writers and not just teachers of writing. McKinney and Giorgis (2009) said, "Viewing oneself as a writer is related to the sense of power and status writers bring with them as part of their life-history" (p. 111). As discussed by Shosh and Zales (2005), teacher groups inquiring into their own writing practice led to students who were more interested in writing.

Many teachers with ideas about professional development are willing to take the step of leading (Fielder, 2010) through the process of becoming a teacher-leader. Taylor, Goeke, Klein, Onore, and Geist (2011) found in their ethnographic study of thirteen

graduate students that the transition from teacher to teacher-leader prompted participants to become “meaning-makers as they identified and amplified their professional voices,” a change from the “receivers of knowledge” they had been before the program (p. 923). Furthermore, participants sought to be change agents by collaborating with teaching professionals beyond their own classrooms and schools. Importantly, this current narrative inquiry study looked at individuals outside of their school setting who worked collaboratively with other teacher-leaders from across the country in meaning-making capacities that could amplify their professional voices in a time-limited, grant-funded context.

Teacher-leaders within an effective model of professional development would necessarily be doubly-committed as responsible for teachers’ learning as well as the effects that this learning would have on the teachers’ students (Ben-Peretz, Kleeman, Reichenberg, Shimoni, 2010). Teacher-leaders add to this a third commitment—their own classrooms to consider. Collinson (2012) found that in her study of eighty-one participants, teacher-leaders were those who had a “commitment to education, a love of learning, doing one’s best, curiosity and open-mindedness,” and humility (p. 263). This humility propelled them “toward learning sources that can provide them with domain expertise, pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of self and others, and a broadening of perspectives” (Collinson, 2012, p. 250) regardless of the risks, mistakes, or negative experiences that might occur in the process. Her study raises the question of what kinds of risks teacher-leaders might be willing to take to seek new learning sources as well as the humility necessary for teacher-leaders to work collaboratively in group leadership capacities to provide learning opportunities for others.

Similar to the roles of teacher-educators, teacher-leaders who step forward as professional development planners and providers “should learn about teaching adults, re-examine basic pedagogies and learn new ones” (Ben-Peretz, Kleeman, Reichenberg, Shimoni, 2010, p. 121). Mentors often provide the beginning learning experiences for how to become leaders and collaborators beyond the classroom (Collinson, 2012). This narrative inquiry study provided the opportunity to explore leadership team members’ interactions as teacher-leaders as well as how they looked to mentor leaders within the National Writing Project throughout the planning of professional development with attention to new pedagogies for teachers.

In the context of grant-funded work, the National Writing Project initiative combined this world of teacher-leadership in professional development for teaching writing with the rigorous design of Literacy Design Collaborative task templates aligned to the Common Core State Standards. In this context, this narrative study also considered the notion posited by McQuitty (2012) that “encountering incompatible ideas can prompt teachers towards more powerful and contextually useful understandings of teaching writing” (p. 384). Exploring seemingly incompatible ideas of workshop-style professional development and template tasks for writing created the opportunity to discover how new understandings might arise when disparate ideas converged.

Reflective Inquiry

Reflective inquiry positions itself in the dimension of continuity within the narrative inquiry framework, and its components of reflection and inquiry need exploration. Reflective inquiry as a tool for planning professional development demands an inquiry stance, which is the “synthesis of critical reflection and action” (Cochran-

Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 133). The inquiring, problem-posing habit of mind “blurs the boundaries between leaders and followers, between those framing the problems and those implementing the changes in response to those problems” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 123), and this narrative inquiry study moved into this blurred boundary to show how leaders and followers were able to get there. With active and forward thinking, reflective inquirers perceive problem-posing as a means for asking questions and searching for answers (Freire, 1970).

A closer look at the definition of inquiry deserves discussion, as well, since it becomes part of the foundation for investigating professional development planning practices. Lindfors’ (1999) defined inquiry as the following:

The word inquire means different things to different people . . . I define an act of inquiry as a language act in which one attempts to elicit another’s help in going beyond his or her own present understanding . . . People explore their world in many ways: they observe, they read, they ponder, they write, they listen. They also turn to others and intentionally engage them in their attempts to understand (p. ix).

It is clear by Lindfors’ definition that inquiry is more than a single act of questioning; it is a process of learning. Inquiry extends knowledge by opening the mind to other possibilities and has the benefits of being “grounded in the realities of educational practice” allowing teachers to identify classroom focus areas and engage in the research process (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 8).

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) described the inquiry stance as “a worldview and a habit of mind—a way of knowing and being in the world of educational practice” (p. viii). Nelson, Slavit, and Deuel (2012) found that in collaborative inquiry settings with a stance toward improving, “data are used to problematize practice, and knowledge becomes dynamic, an ongoing negotiation of learning goals, student understandings, and

implications on practice” (p. 16). Inquiry’s potential for social or school change calls teachers to investigate writing assignments, strategy effectiveness, reflection, or any piece of their teaching practice that invites wonder or question. The development of individual agency and leadership helps teachers form both a community of learners in their classrooms and develop “new identities as potential leaders” in schools (Yonezawa, Jones, & Singer, 2011, p. 924). Inquiry is “a disciplined leadership practice that increases the wider effectiveness of our actions” with transforming effects for ourselves and our organizations (Getz, 2004, p. 448 citing Torbert et al. 2004). This leadership component may be an integral piece within planning effective professional learning experiences, especially experiences with potential to shape teachers’ and schools’ future instructional practices, which this current study sought to discover.

Reflection is the other component of reflective inquiry. Rodgers (2002) explained the need for reflection, a necessary process requiring teachers to slow down and rigorously examine their teaching practice. She went on to suggest “teachers can formulate explanations . . . from their own knowledge of teaching, learning, and subject matter, from each other, and from research” within their educational community (p. 250). Inquiry and reflection are emphasized within the National Writing Project work. Writing Project Fellows with attention to inquiry into classroom practices design demonstrations using the NWP professional development model and continue this work as teacher consultants in leadership roles of planning professional development.

Reflective inquiry, the reflecting back to plan forward, provides leaders the tools for spurring educational change (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 11). Reflective inquiry is more than pondering memories, adjusting well-crafted lessons, or reworking

failed trials for next year's unit on the same subject or the next professional development session. In Lyons' (2006) study of teachers creating professional portfolios, participants cited that "reflective engagement through the portfolio process created a new 'consciousness' of their own teaching practice" (p. 157). This study resulted in her refined definition of reflective engagement appropriate for the discussion about planning professional learning:

Reflective engagement involves a deliberate and intentional act of interrupting, or suspending, one's teaching practices to interrogate or inquire into them systematically and to heighten one's conscious awareness of one's practices and of one's students and then using that consciousness to redirect one's practice and actually acting to change. (p. 166)

Studies (Dias, Eick, & Brantley-Dias, 2011; Getz, 2009; Goodman, 2011; Rodgers, 2002) have shown how teacher reflection positively affects instructional planning, but inquiry takes teachers beyond planning to the deeper levels of praxis, the foundation of teaching. Praxis consists of the simultaneous work of action and reflection and "critical reflection is also action" (Freire, 1970, p. 109) indicating the power of inquiring into one's own practice. Reflective inquiry "embrace[s] the tension" and helps teachers identify and change what causes this tension (Bieler & Thomas, 2009, p. 1050). Scherff (2012) said, "It is through self-examination, question posing, and dialogue with others that we take on a critical stance" (p. 224). Reflective thoughts with beliefs at the center lead to "conscious inquiry into the nature, conditions, and bearings of the belief" (Dewey, 1910, p. 5).

Reflective inquiry as conceptualized by Dewey (1910) and forwarded by Freire (1970) requires asking questions and forward-thinking reflection. Dewey (1910) said

learners must recognize the problem in order to methodically and logically solve it. He stated:

Every judgment is analytic in so far as it involves discernment, discrimination, marking off the trivial from the important, the irrelevant from what points to a conclusion; and it is synthetic in so far as it leaves the mind with an inclusive situation within which the selected facts are placed. (p. 114)

Shapiro and Reiff (1993) said, “Reflective inquiry by the professional practitioner and cohorts will raise the level of consciousness of the various features of one's practice” (p. 1385). Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) extended Shapiro and Reiff's thinking by saying teachers who engage in reflective inquiry position themselves as learners in their own contexts by

posing questions or ‘wonderings,’ collecting data to gain insights into their wonderings, analyzing the data along with reading relevant literature, making changes in practice based on new understandings developed during inquiry, and sharing findings with others. (p. 12)

Professional development planning takes inquiry outside of the classroom to a larger, professional context. Through reflective inquiry, teacher-leaders gain insights into their practice and their students (or participants), leading them to identifying specific ways instruction can meet the varied needs of individuals (Shapiro & Reiff, 1993; Marzano, 2007).

For learning to be successful it demands “voice, choice, and ownership” (Wood, 2010, p. 133), which Fielder (2010) corroborated in a study of primary-grade educators. Inquiry through collaboration assists teachers in examining their own or student work and can build “a collective expertise among themselves to diagnose problems, identify solutions to implement in their classrooms, and increase the [learning] of their students” (Galligan, 2011, p. 55). Importantly, collaborative reflective inquiry requires joint

decision making about data collection, analysis, and meaning making (Mockler, 2014), resulting in meaningful learning for the teachers about both the inquiry and about professional learning communities. As inquirers and collaborators, teacher-leaders can create new pedagogical knowledge, becoming effective as practitioners, career-long learners, facilitators for students, and collaborators with colleagues (Wood, 2010). As a result, reflective inquirers in the role of professional development planners are accountable to their communities of practice, and this study was positioned to discover in what ways.

Struggling “to make meaning of experiences and actions” (McKinney & Giorgis, 2009) reveal teachers who are in the midst of reflective inquiry. Teacher-leaders who engage in dialogue with one another through collaborative reflective inquiry focused on a common goal may offer the means for helping teachers step out of their comfort zones, develop their own ideologies, and grow in their practice. Vetter, Myers, and Hester (2014) argued the importance of internally persuasive discourse in light of ever-changing curriculum tides: “For teachers to mediate negotiations integral to school curriculum, they must be able to reflect on the ideological foundations of education in relation to their personal ideologies about pedagogy” (p. 25). Investigating a collaborative group of teacher-leaders across districts and states to plan professional development curriculum would reveal the strength and differences of the tides that must be negotiated.

Though “the struggle for teacher empowerment has been a long one” (Jones, 2010, p. 151), there is potential for authentic learning to be teamed with teacher-leadership. In this current study, authentic teacher learning characterized by inquiry served as a means of empowering teachers in leadership endeavors. By studying roles in

planning professional development, this narrative inquiry sought to understand how teachers can move beyond lesson planning for classes and reflectively inquire into their past experiences as teachers, learners, and leaders to create practical and enriching experiences for their participants, which became visible in the dimension of continuity in the narrative inquiry framework.

Back-talk

Numerous discourses interact within a situation, affecting its outcome. For instance, multiple complex systems such as university courses, school districts, and professional development often pose disparate ideas about best practices for teaching writing, as McQuitty (2012) found in a case study of one sixth-grade language arts teacher. Schön (1983) also said, “At the same time that the inquirer tries to shape the situation to his frame, he must hold himself open to the situation’s back-talk. He must be willing to enter into new confusions and uncertainties” (p. 164). The “back-talk” describes the disruptions, multiple discourses, or trouble within a situation, one of the dimensions within the narrative inquiry framework. This narrative inquiry study entered professional development planning situations to discover how individuals navigated back-talk and were shaped by interactions within these situations. But individuals can respond and act upon a situation’s multiple discourses by drawing upon and recombining selected resources and, in effect, impact future situations.

Schön’s (1983) work with reflection-in-action positioned the reflective practitioner as part of the situation in which learning happened. He explained that the “practitioner’s reflective conversation with a situation” makes him part of it and therefore shapes it (p. 163). Individuals’ continuity—their series of situations and navigation of

back-talk within those situations—influences their interactions in future situations and potentially shapes their ideologies.

Instructional leaders are teachers developing ideologies about teaching, learning, and classroom practices and who are adding authority to their own voices. Being out of one's comfort zone and feeling tension among professional development best practices and administrative discourses are examples of back-talk. High-stakes accountability and the multiple and varied voices resisting such assessments position teachers in a critical space of tension. McKinney and Giorgis (2009) stated, "Bakhtin (1981) theorized that individuals engage in internal dialogue (resulting from voices encountered in the past) that may aid in the process of constructing and reconstructing ourselves as we struggle to make meaning of experiences and actions" (p. 110). Within this space and through this intense struggle "for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 346) teachers develop new ideologies, navigating authoritative policies with "strategic negotiation" (Stillman, 2011, p. 147). Voices, including back-talk, encountered in the past shape the individuals' continuity.

Navigating and resolving back-talk within professional development situations sometimes requires risk-taking. Risk-taking creates the foundation for innovative learning as the redefinition of failure (Collinson, 2012). Wilson and Berne (1999) captured the essence of learning:

You read, you think, you talk. You get something wrong, you don't understand something, you try it again. Sometimes you hit a wall in your thinking, sometimes it is just too frustrating. Yes, learning can be fun and inspiring but along the way, it usually makes us miserable. (p. 200)

Teacher learning, typically measured by participant responses following professional development sessions (Garet et al., 2001; Parise & Spillane, 2010) is defined by change: change in practice, change in beliefs, change in student learning, or even change in perceived identity (Borko, 2004; Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Meirink, Meijer, Verloop, & Bergen, 2009; Parise & Spillane, 2010; Whitney, 2008). This study explored the idea that change may be in response to how situations' back-talk shapes individuals.

Wood (2010) said, "Transformative learning requires a shift in attitude, from seeking certainty to continuous questioning, as well as the ability to examine assumptions or shift frames of reference" (p. 134). Reflective inquiry rests at the center point of this shift by prompting response to back-talk to accompany new learning. Rather than undermining learning, back-talk or disruptions of "ideologically disparate ideas" (McQuitty, 2012) can be a source for new learning. Change, therefore, would have positive implications for teacher knowledge and professional practice. Philosophical and pedagogical differences among teachers are some of the ideologically disparate ideas that can create back-talk in a collaborative community. However, So's (2013) findings in an eight-person case study indicated that

such differences positively influenced teachers over time: not only did the contrasts among teachers illustrate their tacit beliefs and attitudes and provide them with the opportunity to reflect critically on their own viewpoints, but it also helped them broaden their range of interests and thoughts. (p. 195)

This current narrative inquiry study demonstrated the possibilities available for teacher-leaders to engage in a similar broadening of viewpoints.

Back-talk is much like the wall Wilson and Berne (1999) described: in the space of most tension, when one's personal creative discourse nearly breaks against the rigidity of authority, it seems insurmountable. In a study of forty teachers in three professional

development summer institutes, Raider-Roth, Stieha, and Hensley (2012) questioned what “moments of discord [can] teach us about adult learning, about teaching/learning relationships” (p. 493) and explored the growth that discord prompted. Their findings indicated that “disconnections were often acts of resistance, in order to preserve the teachers’ sense of self as learner . . . [and] that these participants’ reconnections were acts of resilience” (Raider-Roth, Stieha & Hensley, 2012, p. 495). Further, their findings helped them understand the interconnectedness of resistance and resilience in professional development experiences. This study of planning professional development identified similar participant disconnections as disruptions, labeled as back-talk, that caused tension within the initiative narrative.

As Wilson and Berne (1999) commented, learning often makes us miserable, but careful attention to the cause of disruptive back-talk may mitigate its effects. The teacher-leader experiences new situations, including disruptive and possibly negative back-talk, as new learning (Collinson, 2012). Teacher-leaders as professional development planners would guide others to do the same, which this narrative inquiry explored.

Narrative Inquiry to Explore Professional Development Planning

While reflective inquiry is problem-posing and forward action, narrative inquiry reconstructs the experience of learning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Drawing on Dewey’s theory of experience, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) said:

To [retell our stories, remake the past] is the essence of growth and, for Dewey, is an element in the criteria for judging the value of experience . . . Enhancing personal and social growth is one of the purposes of narrative inquiry. (p. 85)

Further, Ball and Freedman (2004) said, “The social interactions that are most effective in promoting learning are those that are filled with tension and conflict. Individuals struggle with these tensions as they develop their own ideologies” (p. 6). These tensions or back-talk became the narrative conflicts in the retelling of initiative stories. James Fredricksen spoke of tensions as “trouble” in his November 15, 2012 National Writing Project Keynote:

Narrative is about trouble and how people respond to it. Trouble is a break in expectations. . .[it depends on a] dynamic mindset [in which] you can change . . . Trouble can reveal our motivation and show us our hopes, what we could be.

This narrative inquiry explored personal interaction and situations, and ensuing back-talk or disruptions—the trouble in the narrative—that layered together to create continuity, the thread that tied the stories of experience together.

Freire’s (1970) critical theory relies on empowering people with the tools to identify problems and how to resolve them. Narrative inquiry pushed the teacher-researcher to analyze elements of situations to better understand how troubled or empowered interactions and developed or underdeveloped continuity informed future contexts of classroom practice or professional development planning (Dewey, 1910; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Seeing narratively allowed the researcher to story a situation in a way that revealed its resolution, offering a possibility for resolving the problems that back-talk caused.

This narrative inquiry gave voice to individuals who may not typically speak. Maxine Greene (1995) spoke of the alienated or marginalized, but her words also point to the quiet voices in the classroom or those planning professional development. She said:

[They] are made to feel distrustful of their own voices, their own ways of making sense, yet they are not provided alternatives that allow them to tell their stories or

shape their narratives or ground new learning in what they already know. (pp. 110-111)

Teachers called to leadership roles to plan professional development “ground new learning in what they already know” and this narrative inquiry provided the space for telling their stories.

To retell the story of experience, this narrative inquiry called for imagining the story elements found in the professional development planning initiative as a cohesive whole. This “imaginative capacity . . . look[ed] at things as if they could be otherwise . . . [with] an awareness of leaving something behind while reaching toward something new” (Greene, 1995, pp. 19-20). This narrative inquiry study explored how the National Writing Project Assignments Matter leadership team members “look[ed] at things as if they could be otherwise.”

Studies showed that teachers who examined personal or practical classroom issues were empowered in their learning and instruction (Bieler & Thomas, 2009; Getz, 2009; Volk, 2010). Reviews of literature on using inquiry within professional development indicated a need for studies on the impact of inquiry-designed professional development (Capps, Crawford, & Constanas, 2013). I extended this argument through a narrative inquiry into professional development planning, attempting to inform our understanding about how leaders navigated situations and interactions to inquire into and reflect on their leadership experiences. In the context of the Assignments Matter initiative, I explored the situations from our past and present experiences that informed the collective initiative narrative. As I brought these situations together, I derived meaning from our present experience. This narrative inquiry study tells the story of that process.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Approval for the study was granted by the University of Louisville Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A). This approval included interviews with participants, audio and video recording meetings, access to online community posts, and email and other electronic communication among participants.

Through the narrative inquiry method, this research study explored the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative for planning professional development. The narrative inquiry dimensions of situation, interaction, and continuity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Dewey, 1938) provided the tools for understanding the planning process for a National Writing Project initiative involving leadership team members and Writing Project site representatives (liaisons).

In storying the situations, interactions, and continuity, I used the concept of back-talk (Schön, 1983) to describe the disruptions or trouble within the initiative situations and to analyze their effects. Narrative inquiry revealed the interactions experienced in situations of planning professional development and the story that can be unearthed from those situations.

In the following sections, I describe the research design, which includes the narrative inquiry three-dimensional framework and the back-talk that disrupts it. Then I

describe the context of the study and list my research questions. Furthermore, the data sources and collection, data analysis, and narrative development are explained in detail.

Research Design

The research design of narrative inquiry positioned me subjectively to construct meaning with the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Wortham, 2001).

Interactions with and among leadership team members became a “way of understanding experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. Xxvi). Clandinin and Connelly explained the role of narrative inquirers: “They are never [in the field] as disembodied recorders of someone else’s experience. They too are having an experience, the experience of the inquiry that entails the experience they set out to explore” (p. 81).

Knowing each other’s situations and continuity of situations can “transform relationships in the interaction between narrator and audience” (Wortham, 2001, p. 11). Situations offered the context for interactions. The participants of the leadership team and I resided *in* the experience, *in* the parade as Clandinin and Connelly said; yet I had to be removed enough to examine the “three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” of interaction, continuity, and situation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50) and the back-talk that disrupted those dimensions, particularly situation. The continuity each leadership team member and liaison brought to the initiative—school demographics, personal and professional motivations, and dispositions—revealed the new understandings about the world around us (Georgakopoulou, 2006).

As researcher-participant, I contributed to the narrative while also constructing meaning from my own and others’ experiences. Over the course of the eighteen-month initiative, the interactions within each situation shifted, as did the continuity of

experiences each person brought to situations. The process of constructing meaning continued with each new experience.

What follows is a research design that begins with the context of the three-dimensional inquiry space discussed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and identified by Dewey (1938) as interaction, situation, and continuity. The design continues with the back-talk (Schön, 1983) that disrupted the narrative.

Narrative Inquiry Three-Dimensional Framework

The three-dimensional inquiry space, as shown in Figure 1, is the relationship among interaction, situation, and continuity, much as the walls of a three-sided pyramid interconnect with equal space, precise measurements, and distributed balance.

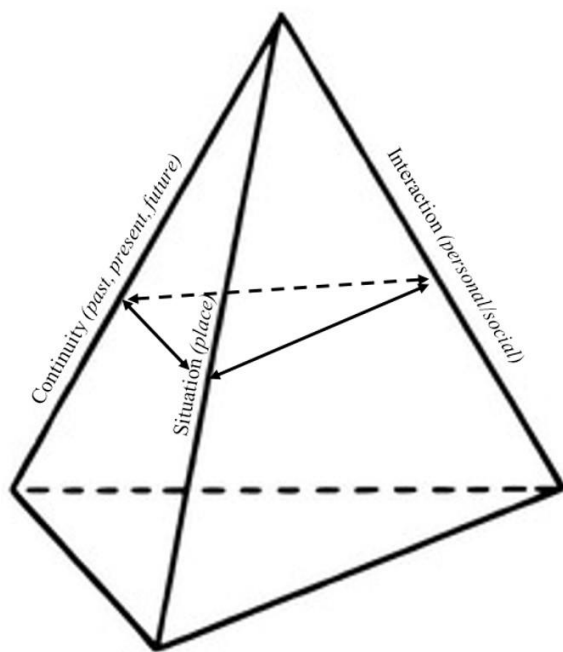


Figure 1. Three-dimensional inquiry space: interaction, situation, continuity

Interaction.

The personal and social dimension of a narrative is what Dewey (1938) called “interaction.” He explained:

An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment . . . The environment, in other words, is whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had. (p. 43)

To understand the narrative of the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative, I noticed how participants interacted with one another and with our environments. These personal and social

interactions helped establish individual perspectives in the narrative and showed how individuals responded to one another and to situations.

Situation. Situation is the set of experiences that includes the time, place, and space. Dewey (1938) also described situation in terms of its relationship to interaction:

The statement that individuals live in a world means, in the concrete, that they live in a series of situations. . . It means, once more, that interaction is going on between an individual and objects and other persons. The conceptions of situation and of interaction are inseparable from each other. (p. 43)

Many situations in this study were unbounded by geographical place through the use of technology to meet in virtual spaces. In virtual spaces as well as physical spaces, participants and I acted upon and reacted to our situation and its back-talk or disruptions, which in turn affected future situations.

Continuity. Continuity consists of the series of situations through which experiences are developed. When placing data within the narrative space of continuity, I considered how previous experiences affected current situations and interactions within these situations. The focus of the study was the planning of an eighteen-month professional development initiative with key elements drawn from a previous initiative experience. The continuity of experiences depended upon understanding past situations, reflecting on how those situations affected the present, and consciously engaging with any disruptions in the situations to imagine the future.

Back-talk

To examine more closely the “back-talk” (Schön, 1983, p. 164) within the initiative, I magnified situations along the initiative time-line in order to identify their places within the larger narrative of the initiative. Back-talk within these situations created the narrative conflict of the initiative story. How we engaged with the back-talk

of our past and present situations through the professional development planning process shaped our future situations.

Context of Study

Initiative

September 20-21, 2014, the leadership team began planning for the eighteen-month Assignments Matter professional development initiative to reach one thousand educators. The team, following grant guidelines, established professional learning around the idea of creating a meaningful writing prompt. The goals in the professional learning experience were to address the disconnect between writing assignments and the products, analyze the cause for such disconnects, design new writing prompts, peer review the assignments, and reflect on the process. This process was called a “task jam” by the leadership team. To assist the leadership team, over twenty liaisons facilitated the work at sites across the country. The final day was November 21, 2015 when leadership team members and liaisons juried the tasks created through this year of work.

The initiative focused on one element of the Literacy Design Collaborative work—task writing— and derived much of its material from *Assignments Matter* by Eleanor Dougherty (2012). The initiative’s professional development design used a Literacy Design Collaborative (ldc.org) protocol for creating meaningful writing assignments for students through the task bank (Appendix B), peer review, and jurying rubric (Appendix C). Leadership team members’ interactions within situations along the time-line of planning the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative were the focus of this study.

Each situation presented a segment of the Assignments Matter initiative in which the leadership team came together to plan professional development to reach one thousand educators over the course of a year and a half. The National Writing Project leadership team met face-to-face four times and online virtually a dozen times to plan the professional development model to be used by the facilitators throughout the initiative. Virtual meetings took place via Google Hangout or Google Hangout on Air. Other conversations occurred via email to prepare for these meetings or update team members on action items. The hybrid virtual and face-to-face modes of the initiative created some challenges for planning professional development and may be sources for additional future research.

Participants

Participants included the six members of the National Writing Project Assignments Matter leadership team, including myself, the Director of National Programs at the National Writing Project, and selected representatives of the twenty Writing Project site liaisons. The members of the leadership team taught middle or high school or were involved in literacy consultant roles with middle or high schools. Each of us had varying levels of teaching experience, ranging from ten years to forty plus. Additionally, each member had at least two years of experience with the Literacy Design Collaborative work and differing levels of expertise in its classroom, school, and district implementation.

Aileen and Sasha were high school teachers in different Midwestern suburban schools. Aileen's position as a Writing Project co-director and her experience jurying modules for the Literacy Design Collaborative made her an integral member for

extending this work. She conscientiously scheduled late arrivals and early departures for her flights to minimize the time away from teaching her diverse population of students. They missed her and her yoga time-outs when she was gone. With incredible support from her administrator, who sometimes offered to be Aileen's classroom substitute, Aileen could address her students' needs, revising lesson plans if necessary, even though low-performing school checklists would not typically allow her this flexibility.

During the initiative, Sasha switched to a new dual role as instructional coach and English teacher in her diversely-populated school. She described more success working with other content areas than with her own English department. Unlike Aileen's, Sasha's administrative team offered less support to the teachers in the building. Prior to Sasha taking this new position, she had been teaching Advanced Placement Language for honors students and a reading lab for low-performing readers. For the teaching side of her dual role, she requested the reading lab, but her principal could not understand her commitment to trying new strategies to help struggling readers. This was another reminder of why she sought Writing Project "gigs" that supported her in different ways than her school did. Later, she laughed when remembering Aileen's reply to her question about getting involved with Writing Project work. Aileen had said, "There's this thing. Do you want to do it?" Afterward, any new invitation for her was "this thing."

The two gentlemen on the team were both from a northeastern state. Hank taught middle school before taking a dual role in his suburban school as technology director and language arts teacher. He said he "literally stole the words" from our initiative to write a technology grant roll-out plan for his district. His previously-skeptical attitude about the Writing Project ideas for teaching writing, ones that challenged traditional test

preparation, had been changed by witnessing the broad scale of data on meaningful, successful, and effective work. Although he could not attend two of the liaison meetings in person, his technology background and experience with instructional design pushed our thinking during the planning sessions for those meetings.

Martin entered education and the Writing Project many years before this initiative and had tried to retire in a number of ways. A former English teacher, summer camp director, and school literacy consultant in the state's more urban areas, Martin still taught education and literacy programs at a museum, worked with his local Writing Project site, and answered invitations extended by the National Writing Project. His personal response and ability to guide participants and students with writing invitations made it no surprise that leadership team members thought him brilliant, though he claimed frustration with the ever-changing technology and the resulting new slang.

Jenny and I were from a southeastern state. Jenny entered the Writing Project within the first three years of her high school social studies teaching career, which shaped many of her views on collaboration and literacy within the content areas. Having previously experienced less supportive educative structures, she often praised her current school administration and teachers for their friendly, sharing atmosphere. After the initiative was underway, Jenny began her doctoral studies in content-area literacy. Her cohort program complemented her classroom work by providing extensive tools for thinking about planning content-area literacy in new ways.

I brought a variety of educational experiences to this initiative table after teaching middle school language arts for ten years, taking time to pursue doctoral studies in literacy education, and switching to the high school English classroom. Still relatively

new to the Writing Project, I had been privileged with several invitations from my site director to take small leadership roles. In my current phase of doctoral research, my leadership role on this initiative would be paired with a researcher stance for a study on professional development planning.

The Director of National Programs, a northeast transplant to a western state, and the Program Manager, originally from a Midwest town, both represented the National Writing Project, though the Program Manager was not a part of the study. Sam's responsibilities included applying for grant money to fund initiatives across the country. In the position of director, she recruited teacher consultants from Writing Project sites to work in long and short-term initiatives with various partner agencies such as the Literacy Design Collaborative formerly funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Assignments Matter initiative was one she would call "short-term" with its eighteen-month duration. Throughout her career in the National Writing Project, she attributed her leadership skills to others who have led before her and to the intelligence of the people she leads. Her mantra was that we were smarter together than any one person was alone. Sam was positioned as leader of our leadership team due to her knowledge about the grant's demands as well as her ability to communicate with sites across the nation. Her expertise with long-term initiatives and short-term projects guided our conversations as team members planning an initiative for the first time.

I knew Jenny from our state Writing Project network and met Sam, Hank, Martin, Sasha, and Aileen in the previous Literacy Design Collaborative initiative. Additional participants were selected from the twenty Writing Project site facilitators from across the nation who were recruited to implement the professional development workshop within

their local communities. Their selection was based on access to recorded interactions within initiative situations and interviews of volunteers.

Research Questions

This study sought to understand professional development planning in the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative through a narrative inquiry framework. This study investigated situations and their back-talk along the initiative time-line that corresponded to the story of the initiative. The findings to these questions demonstrated the elements necessary for leadership team development.

1. How does narrative inquiry inform our understanding of a National Writing Project initiative to plan professional development?
2. What disrupts the narrative of a National Writing Project initiative to plan professional development?

Data Sources

Each meeting point along the initiative time-line provided opportunities to collect various types of data. The following table details the type of interaction and data sources for each meeting date. Researcher memos continued along the time-line between the beginning and ending dates of the initiative.

Table 1

Data Sources by Date and Type of Interaction

Date	Type of Interaction	Data Sources
September 20-21, 2014	face-to-face leadership team initial planning meeting	posters; agenda; meeting notes; researcher memos
October 20, 2014	Google Hangout online leadership team meeting	meeting notes; researcher memos

Date	Type of Interaction	Data Sources
November 22, 2014	face-to-face leadership team professional learning day with site facilitators	agenda; video recordings of learning day demonstration segments
	face-to-face leadership team debrief	audio recording; researcher memos
January 24, 2015	Google Hangout on Air and Google Plus community online event with participants at 20 sites	video recordings of 6 Google Hangout on Air check-ins with different sites; Twitter feed #tasksmatter; Google Plus Assignments Matter community; researcher memos
February 2, 2015	Google Hangout online leadership team meeting	agenda; meeting notes; audio recording; researcher memos
February 18, 2015	Google Hangout online leadership team meeting	agenda; meeting notes; audio recording; researcher memos
March 4, 2015	Google Hangout online leadership team meeting	agenda; meeting notes; audio recording; researcher memos
March 25, 2015	individual face-to-face interview with one leadership team member	audio recording; researcher memos
March 26, 2015	face-to-face leadership team planning meeting	agenda; meeting notes; audio recording; researcher memos
March 27, 2015	individual face-to-face interviews with three leadership team members	audio recordings; researcher memos
March 28, 2015	face-to-face leadership team professional learning day with site facilitators	agenda; video recordings of learning day demonstration segments; Twitter feed #tasksmatter; audio recording of debrief with leadership team members; researcher memos
March 29, 2015	individual face-to-face interview with one leadership team member	audio recording; researcher memos

Date	Type of Interaction	Data Sources
August 20, 2015	phone interview with leadership team member	audio recording; researcher memos
September 8, 2015	Google Hangout online leadership team meeting	agenda; meeting notes; audio recording; researcher memos
September 22, 2015	Google Hangout online leadership team meeting	agenda; meeting notes; audio recording; researcher memos
September 23, 2015	phone interview with leadership team member	audio recording; researcher memos
October 26, 2015	Google Hangout online leadership team meeting	agenda; meeting notes audio recording; researcher memos
November 10, 2015	Google Hangout online leadership team meeting	agenda; meeting notes; audio recording; researcher memos
November 19, 2015	National Writing Project Annual Meeting shark tank session	back-channel Todaysmeet transcript
November 20, 2015	face-to-face individual interview with one leadership team member; face-to-face individual interviews with two liaisons	audio recording; video recordings; researcher memos
November 21, 2015	face-to-face leadership team professional learning day with site facilitators	video recordings of activity introductions/demonstrations; audio recording of debrief with leadership team members; researcher memos
January 6, 2016	individual phone interviews with two leadership team members	audio recording; researcher memos

Additionally, the following table organizes the data by type of interaction and includes detail about the duration of interactions.

Table 2

Quantity of Data Sources by Type of Interaction

Type of interaction	Data sources
face-to-face leadership team meetings	3 hours 10 minutes audio recordings; agendas; meeting notes
Google Hangout online leadership team meetings	7 hours audio recordings; agendas; meeting notes
face-to-face leadership team and liaison large group meetings	7 hours 20 minutes video recordings; agendas; meeting notes
one-on-one interviews with Leadership Team members via face-to-face and phone	6 hours 27 minutes audio recordings
volunteered interviews with two liaisons	32 minutes video recordings
participant-observer research notes and memos	88 original memos; 35 (minimum) meeting notes, agendas, reminders, and early research directions

Data Collection

As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated, “In narrative inquiry, people are looked at as embodiments of lived stories . . . [and] are seen as composing lives that shape and are shaped by social and cultural narratives” (p. 43). Looking across data, I found that participants’ voices embodied the initiative’s narrative. The twelve individual interviews, including initial and follow-up, four face-to-face leadership team meetings, including planning and debriefing, and the larger meetings with liaisons offered significant and rich data to analyze. One particular video segment from the initiative roll-out highlighted a critical moment in the time-line, which I explain below in the development of the interview protocol.

Eighty-eight original memos written during data collection showed the constant-comparative process of research question evolution from what reflective inquiry looked like in a National Writing Project initiative to the broader question of how we might understand a National Writing Project initiative through narrative inquiry. These memos captured details such as setting, participants, description, and values. A minimum of 35 memos included meeting notes and agendas, reminders, and early research directions. These memos documented the participant-observer lens through which I viewed the data.

Jean Faley's (Berger & Quinney, 2005) take on narrative sociology prompted me to look at my own narrative inquiry in the way she divided the sections in hers: what I knew I didn't know, what I didn't know I knew, and what I didn't know I didn't know. In this study, I didn't know the best way to document our meetings on Google Hangout but knew they were necessary data for my work. My failed attempt to screen capture and record our Google Hangout meetings on October 20, 2014 and November 10, 2014 led to careful audio-recording future online meetings without using the video function.

What follows describes the development of the interview protocol, the transcription process for the leadership team meetings, and the participant review of transcripts.

Development of Interview Protocol

Tense moments during the initiative's roll-out meeting to liaisons in November 2014 influenced the decisions to view meeting recordings, transcribe selected segments, and develop interview questions that I would pose to leadership team members during our Washington, D.C. National Writing Project Spring Meeting in March 2015. The segment included liaisons' questions about the initiative and the National Writing Project

director's responses to these questions. Two resulting questions included in the interview protocol were "What is NWP?" and "Why do you keep saying yes to NWP invitations?"

The complete list of interview questions included the following (also included as Appendix D):

- 1) What is your story of entering the Writing Project?
- 2) Why do you keep saying yes?
- 3) How has the Writing Project affected your beliefs about writing? Affected your views on teaching writing?
- 4) How has the Assignments Matter initiative impacted you?
- 5) What is the NWP way?
- 6) What are the takeaways of planning professional development?
- 7) What are the most powerful aspects of planning professional development? Powerful impacts?
- 8) Follow-up questions
- 9) Anything else to add?

Transcription Process and Review

I transcribed the November 22, 2014 leadership team debrief meeting recording and sent the transcript to leadership team members. This first transcript included audible breaks but did not identify body language. After participant feedback on difficulties with the transcript's readability, I later only included audible affirmations ("mhum"), thought responses ("hmm"), and verbal breaks ("like") in transcripts and excluded speech placeholders ("uh"). For transcripts of online meetings, pauses greater than seven seconds were documented to account for silence and were often accompanied with notations such as "looking at document."

The NWP Spring Meeting afforded opportunities to interview leadership team members individually. These interviews were audio recorded, and transcripts were reviewed by the interviewees. Transcripts included audible affirmations ("mhum"),

thought responses ("hmm"), and verbal breaks ("like") but did not include other speech placeholders such as "uh" in order to improve readability.

Follow-up one-on-one conversations were based on initial interviews and leadership team members' discussions about their roles in their local professional contexts. Again, transcripts did not include all speech placeholders, but some interviewees were recorded as comically saying they needed to improve their speech patterns from previous interviews and speak in complete sentences. Two follow-up conversations took place during the final planning stages of the initiative. These two conversations discussed the planning of professional development. Follow-up interviews with two other leadership team members after the close of the initiative discussed the effective elements of professional development planning. The transcripts were sent to interviewees for review.

Data Analysis

The three-dimensional inquiry space of interaction, situation, and continuity and the disruption of this space by back-talk informed the narrative mode of analysis procedures. Narrative mode of analysis differs from analysis of narratives in that the former (and the chosen mode for this study) is attributed to Polkinghorne's (1995) method "of emplotting the data, in which we would analyze the narrative data that consist of actions, events, and happenings, in order to produce coherent stories as an outcome of the analysis" (Kim, 2016, p. 197). Analysis of narratives "seeks to identify common themes or conceptual manifestations discovered in the data" (Kim, 2016, p. 196). Kim (2016) summarized Polkinghorne's narrative mode of analysis representative of what was used in this study:

- It focuses on the events, actions, happenings, and other data elements to put them together in a plot;
- It uses to-and-fro, recursive movement from parts to whole or from whole to parts;
- It fills in the gaps between events and actions using a narrative smoothing process;
- It maintains that narrative analysis is not merely a transcription of the data, but is a means of showing the significance of the lived experience in the final story;
- It makes the range of disconnected data elements coherent in a way that it appeals to the reader;
- It makes the final story congruent with the data while bringing narrative meanings that are not explicit in the data themselves;
- It emphasizes connotation and sustains the metaphoric richness of a story.
(Kim, 2016, pp. 197-198)

In order to distill the significant “events, actions, and happenings,” I analyzed data using first and second cycles of coding (Saldaña, 2013) described in detail below but briefly introduced here. In the first cycle, codes were developed based on their relationship to narrative. Attribute coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 70) labeled setting and characters; process coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 96) indicated the narrative action and will be referred to as “gerund codes;” and in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 91) identified the participants’ and story’s traits and will be referred to as “trait codes” to better distinguish between coding and QSR International's NVivo 11 qualitative data analysis Software used to analyze data collected during this study. In the second cycle of pattern coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 210), I used a cross-code matrix of the first cycle codes to highlight code frequencies. Looking at patterns of code frequencies enabled me to focus on the traits and narrative action that most intersected across data. Pattern coding became the foundation for the narrative development using narrative mode of analysis and narrative smoothing.

First Cycle Coding

Attribute coding.

In attribute coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 70), data were assigned the attributes of setting, participants, data format, and time frame. These labels allowed me to plot the data collection along the initiative's time-line and later recognize the recursive nature of other first cycle codes.

Process “gerund” coding.

Participant-observer researcher memos documented distinct actions, feelings, and experiences taking place within the initiative. I coded these researcher memos using process codes with gerunds (Saldaña, 2013, p. 96), or gerund codes, to identify the observable actions in the initiative. This gerund coding structure was used with the 88 researcher memos documenting events in the initiative and resulted in the twenty-five gerund codes listed in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Process “Gerund” Codes Produced from Participant-Observer Researcher Memos

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| • asking what is NWP | • implementing NWP in other contexts |
| • debriefing experience | • leading from the classroom |
| • describing effective professional development | • learning leadership capacity |
| • describing teaching context | • negotiating initiative planning |
| • describing the initiative | • problematizing reflective inquiry |
| • describing trust | • reflecting on initiative experience |
| • doubting selves | • reflecting on values |
| • engaging in reflective inquiry | • responding to writing invitation |
| • experiencing collaboration in professional contexts | • shaping self as leader |
| • experiencing NWP invitation | • theorizing professional development |
| • finding leadership roles | • thinking through personal contexts |
| • honoring teacher leaders | • transforming resistance |
| | • valuing learning |

In vivo “trait” coding.

Leadership team meetings and interviews were the sources for in vivo “trait” codes because they were the participants’ voices in the initiative narrative and provided the narrative traits for the “characters” in the initiative story. Transcribing each meeting and interview caused me to notice recurring words in transcripts. Notable were the words trust, struggle, and overwhelm, which described the participants’ traits at points along the initiative time-line. Continued analysis provided the additional trait codes of collaborate, feedback, embrace (and accept), magic, messiness, invitation, and power (and empower) that I then included in my data retrieval and analysis. These trait codes were used in NVivo 11, QSR International's qualitative data analysis Software, to retrieve data with these specific value-laden words and variations of these word stems. The trait codes reflected participants’ values, attitudes, and beliefs and are listed in Table 4 below.

Table 4

In Vivo “Trait” Codes Retrieved from Participants’ Voices

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• collaborate (also collaboration)• embrace (also accept)• feedback• invite (also invitation)• magic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• messy• overwhelm• power (also empower)• struggle• trust
--	---

Double coding.

After retrieving selections of data using these trait codes, I read the context surrounding these data and applied the gerund codes generated from the researcher memos (see Table 3) to indicate the observable action taking place when trait codes were present in data of participants’ voices. Gerund codes applied to the context surrounding all the trait codes (Table 4) indicated how these traits—the values, attitudes, and

beliefs—were experienced within the initiative. For example, I retrieved the following data selection from an interview transcript using the trait code *collaboration* (line 208) in Nvivo 11 Software (see Table 5).

Table 5

Sample Trait Code Data Selection with Surrounding Context

204	Aileen	One of the things that I've appreciated so much
205	Aileen	about the Writing Project from day 1
206	Aileen	is their belief that the best professional development
207	Aileen	is teachers teaching teachers
208	Aileen	and this idea of <i>collaboration</i> .

The context of this data selection (lines 204-208) was then coded with *asking what is NWP?* These interview transcript lines point to the moment at which Aileen was answering my question “What is the Writing Project way?” This data selection indicates she described the National Writing Project as “teachers teaching teachers and this idea of collaboration” (lines 207-208). My participant-observer role in the study also provided me with insight into “the Writing Project from day 1” (line 205) as the first day of the Writing Project Summer Invitational Institute. This knowledge informed the coding of this data selection as also *experiencing the NWP invitation*.

Second Cycle Coding

High frequency trait codes.

The second cycle of analysis enabled me to locate significant lived experiences. In order to focus on trait and gerund codes central to the research question and most descriptive of the initiative, I used a cross-code matrix to identify the most-frequently intersecting trait and gerund codes. Pattern coding through a cross-code matrix identified traits most likely to be present during particular moments of action. This method of

pattern coding was used to zoom into the most salient narrative moments and descriptive traits of the initiative narrative. The most frequent trait codes for each gerund code were highlighted and marked with horizontal lines as seen in Figure 2 below.

	A : Collaborate	Embrace and Acc	C : Feedback	D : Invitation	E : Magic	F : Messy	G : Overwhelm	Power and Empos	I : Smart	J : Struggle	K : Trust
01 : asking what is NWP	3	4	4	8	13	1	1	12	12	8	7
02 : debriefing experience	4	6	8	2	9	1	4	1	3	7	4
03 : describing effective professional development	0	1	0	5	13	1	8	3	2	4	24
04 : describing teaching context	4	1	9	6	2	0	9	8	6	26	8
05 : describing the initiative	3	7	13	1	13	3	4	7	5	8	9
06 : describing trust	3	0	4	2	3	1	0	7	1	5	30
07 : doubting selves	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	4	8	4	8
08 : engaging in reflective inquiry	0	1	1	4	2	4	8	2	13	13	8
09 : experiencing collaboration in professional com	14	2	23	10	7	4	6	30	7	30	13
10 : experiencing NWP invitation	2	4	0	44	7	3	3	26	12	12	31
11 : finding leadership roles	0	0	0	8	5	0	1	9	4	4	0
12 : honoring teacher leaders	1	0	2	31	1	0	5	7	1	4	5
13 : implementing NWP in other contexts	0	3	1	15	1	1	1	2	0	2	14
14 : leading from the classroom	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	3	8
15 : learning leadership capacity	0	1	0	10	7	2	7	16	7	8	18
16 : negotiating initiative planning	2	0	20	0	0	1	16	6	2	9	1
17 : problematizing reflective inquiry	0	1	2	1	0	1	3	2	1	4	7
18 : reflecting on initiative experience	3	2	5	3	10	1	2	8	1	7	3
19 : reflecting on values	1	3	2	5	1	0	0	8	1	5	3
20 : responding to writing invitation	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0
21 : shaping self as leader	0	1	0	8	7	0	0	19	4	1	2
22 : theorizing professional development	0	3	9	8	14	0	7	11	2	7	14
23 : thinking through personal contexts	8	3	20	16	3	1	10	22	16	28	7
24 : transforming resistance	0	0	2	3	1	1	1	2	5	4	5
25 : valuing learning	3	3	5	6	3	1	3	15	8	5	5

Figure 2. Cross-code matrix of high frequency trait codes for gerund codes

Focusing on high frequencies of trait codes resulted in the first step of narrowing the scope of gerund codes from twenty-five codes to nineteen as seen in Figure 3.

	A : Collaborate	Embrace and Acc	C : Feedback	D : Invitation	E : Magic	F : Messy	G : Overwhelm	Power and Empos	I : Smart	J : Struggle	K : Trust
01 : asking what is NWP	3	4	4	8	13	1	1	12	12	8	7
02 : debriefing experience	4	6	8	2	9	1	4	1	3	7	4
03 : describing effective professional development	0	1	0	5	13	1	8	3	2	4	24
04 : describing teaching context	4	1	9	6	2	0	9	8	6	26	8
05 : describing the initiative	3	7	13	1	13	3	4	7	5	8	9
07 : doubting selves	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	4	8	4	8
08 : engaging in reflective inquiry	0	1	1	4	2	4	8	2	13	13	8
09 : experiencing collaboration in professional com	14	2	23	10	7	4	6	30	7	30	13
10 : experiencing NWP invitation	2	4	0	44	7	3	3	26	12	12	31
12 : honoring teacher leaders	1	0	2	31	1	0	5	7	1	4	5
13 : implementing NWP in other contexts	0	3	1	15	1	1	1	2	0	2	14
15 : learning leadership capacity	0	1	0	10	7	2	7	16	7	8	18
16 : negotiating initiative planning	2	0	20	0	0	1	16	6	2	9	1
20 : responding to writing invitation	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0
21 : shaping self as leader	0	1	0	8	7	0	0	19	4	1	2
22 : theorizing professional development	0	3	9	8	14	0	7	11	2	7	14
23 : thinking through personal contexts	8	3	20	16	3	1	10	22	16	28	7
25 : valuing learning	3	3	5	6	3	1	3	15	8	5	5

Figure 3. Resulting gerund codes after trait code frequency analysis

High frequency gerund codes.

Cross-coding also identified moments of action that were most likely to occur when particular traits were present. The next pattern to analyze was the frequency of gerund codes for each trait code. High frequencies of gerund codes were identified with vertical lines. High frequencies of gerund codes that intersected with previously-highlighted trait codes were hatch-marked as seen in Figure 4. Hatch-marks indicated codes most frequent in both directions and provided data analysis boundaries.

	A : Collaborate	B : Embrace and Accept	C : Feedback	D : Invitation	E : Magic	F : Messy	G : Overwhelm	H : Power and Empowerment	I : Smart	J : Struggle	K : Trust
01 : asking what is NWP	3	4	4	8	1	1	1	1	8	7	
02 : debriefing experience	4	6	8	2	9	1	4	1	3	4	
03 : describing effective professional development	0	1	0	5	1	1	3	2	4		
04 : describing teaching context	4	1	9	6	2	0	8	6	5	8	
05 : describing the initiative	3	7	1	1	3	4	7	5	8	8	
07 : doubting selves	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	4	8	8	
08 : engaging in reflective inquiry	0	1	1	4	2	3	4	8	2	1	
09 : experiencing collaboration in professional contexts	11	2	10	7	2	6	2	7	20	13	
10 : experiencing NWP invitation	2	4	0	7	3	3	16	12	16		
12 : honoring teacher leaders	1	0	2	1	0	1	1	1	4	4	
13 : implementing NWP in other contexts	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	2	8	
15 : learning leadership capacity	0	1	0	7	2	7	16	7	8	18	
16 : negotiating initiative planning	2	0	0	0	1	6	2	8	1		
20 : responding to writing invitation	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	
21 : shaping self as leader	0	1	0	8	0	0	13	4	1	2	
22 : theorizing professional development	0	3	9	8	0	7	13	2	7	10	
23 : thinking through personal contexts	3	3	16	3	1	10	25	16	28	7	
25 : valuing learning	3	3	5	3	1	3	15	5	5		

Figure 4. Gerund and trait code intersections

High frequency codes and collapsing codes.

Identifying the most frequent codes in both directions helped me magnify the elements of the initiative that needed to be brought to the forefront. Further analysis showed similarities among several gerund codes (e.g. the gerund codes *describing teaching context* and *implementing NWP in other contexts* were addressed by the gerund code *thinking through personal contexts*; the gerund codes *shaping self as leader*, *doubting selves*, and *honoring teacher-leaders* were included in *learning leadership capacity*). After focusing on high-frequency patterns and collapsing similar codes, the second cycle of coding resulted in the codes depicted in Figure 5.

	B : Embrace	C : Feedback	D : Invitation	E : Magic	G : Overwhelm	H : Power	I : Smart	J : Struggle	K : Trust
01 : asking what is NWP	4	4	8	1	1	1	8	7	
03 : describing effective professional development	1	0	5	8	3	2	4		
04 : describing teaching context	1	9	6	2	9	6	28	8	
05 : describing the initiative	7	1	1	4	7	5	8	18	
09 : experiencing collaboration in professional contexts	2	10	7	6	20	7	20	13	
10 : experiencing NWP invitation	4	0	7	3	26	12	15		
15 : learning leadership capacity	1	0	10	7	16	7	8	18	
16 : negotiating initiative planning	0	0	0	16	6	2	9	1	
23 : thinking through personal contexts	3	16	3	10	25	16	28	7	

Figure 5. Cross-code matrix patterns

Narrative Development

Narrative Mode of Analysis

The eighteen codes (nine gerund codes and nine trait codes) resulting from the second cycle coding enabled me to see the significance of the lived experience within the data (Kim, 2016). As shown in the cross-code matrix patterns (Figure 5), the gerund

code *asking what is NWP?* had the associated most-frequent trait codes of *magic*, *power/empower*, and *smart*. In the narration of the initiative, it would be important to describe how people might perceive National Writing Project work as being magical, empowering, and intelligent. The code *describing effective professional development* had the most frequently-associated trait codes of *magic*, *overwhelm*, and *trust*. As the narrative of the initiative to plan professional development progressed I would need to demonstrate how magic, overwhelm, and trust together could describe effective professional development.

The two gerund codes above—*asking what is NWP?* and *describing effective professional development*—along with the gerund code *describing the initiative*—were most frequent for the trait code *magic*. Because the trait code magic surfaced in these three observable actions, it was necessary for me to attempt to explain how magic existed in a professional development world.

Three gerund codes for which *trust*, an emerging theme throughout the data, was a most-frequent trait were *describing effective professional development*, *experiencing NWP invitation*, and *learning leadership capacity*. As I drafted the situation descriptions, trust would need to be included in most of the situations where those gerund codes appeared because of their frequent intersections.

The cross-code matrix table of frequently-overlapping gerund and trait codes and collapsing similar gerund codes enabled me to narrow the scope from twenty-five original gerund codes to nine and eleven original trait codes down to nine. I focused on these intersecting gerund and trait codes to locate the “resonant threads” as the “particular plotlines that threaded or wove over time and place” through the initiative (Clandinin,

2013, p. 132). When these resonant threads became knotted, indicative of chronotope, I identified back-talk as the cause and used this back-talk as the narrative conflict in the story. Back-talk, as described earlier, is trouble or disruption in a situation.

Narrative Smoothing

The data identified by these codes underwent “narrative smoothing” (Spence, 1986) that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described as a judicial process of researcher choices. Kim (2016) explained narrative smoothing as “brushing off the rough edges of disconnected raw data” to make the story “coherent, engaging, and interesting to the reader” (p. 192). Using narrative smoothing, I identified a story pattern along the initiative time-line as well as the story within each situation by finding back-talk as the source of narrative conflict. Narrative smoothing offered the literary tools for writing the creative nonfiction account of the initiative.

During the phase of narrative smoothing within narrative development, I considered how this initiative story could have “a moral persuasiveness that makes the reader engage in imagination to take the perspective of our protagonists and consider new and different things possible and important” (Kim, 2016, p. 113). In doing so, I determined how the resulting gerund codes illustrated significant narrative moments in the seven situations along the initiative’s time-line. Trait codes were selected for their ability to enrich the description of these particular situations and participants within them. While Table 6 identifies the codes used in each narrative situation, it does not point to a pattern or suggest that an oft-repeated code is any more important than a code that only appears once.

Table 6

Codes Within Each Situation

Codes	Situations						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
01: asking what is NWP		x				x	
03: describing effective professional development	x		x	x	x		
04: describing teaching context					x		
05: describing the initiative	x					x	
09: experiencing collaboration in professional contexts	x				x		x
10: experiencing NWP invitation		x					
15: learning leadership capacity			x			x	x
16: negotiating initiative planning				x		x	
23: thinking through personal contexts	x						x
B: accept/embrace	x					x	x
C: feedback	x		x		x		x
D: invitation	x	x					
E: magic	x			x			x
G: overwhelm				x			
I: smart	x	x					
J: struggle						x	x
K: trust		x		x	x		x

By considering the initiative and how these codes highlighted its significant events, I could make “the final story congruent with the data while bringing narrative meanings that are not explicit in the data themselves” (Kim, 2016, p. 198). Through the narrative development using Polkinghorne’s narrative mode of analysis (Kim, 2016), I valued the meaning within the data by urging a story to emerge.

CHAPTER IV

STORYING THE INITIATIVE

Organization of Data Findings as Situations

Narrative inquiry provided the framework of interaction, situation, and continuity for me to understand the role each had in the creation of a three-dimensional narrative space. There is power in recognizing the depth of each dimension in the success of an initiative such as the focus of this study; therefore, I organized these data findings as story situations to narrate significant moments in the initiative. These situations revealed the personal connections we made during each of our interactions throughout the Assignments Matter initiative. Back-talk, the disruptions in each situation, became the narrative conflict for telling the story.

Situations were chosen from significant moments along the initiative time-line and together formed the continuity for our professional growth and learning. In selecting specific times, places, and spaces to include in the initiative narrative, I first considered the importance of the four face-to-face meetings. These meetings became points to emphasize in the time-line because of their visible impact on the course of the initiative. To start was the leadership team planning event in September 2014 that became “What Are We Doing?” (Situation 1). The other three were larger meetings of the combined leadership team members and liaisons in November 2014 for the initiative roll-out in

“The Turn” (Situation 2), March 2015 for the roll-out debrief and next steps planning in “They Trust Us Now” (Situation 5), and November 2015 for the closing in “Into the End with Buds, Thorns, and Roses” (Situation 7). “Task Jam” (Situation 3) captured the first major phase of the initiative to reach one thousand people on January 24, 2015, which connected all participating Writing Project sites and leadership team members. The culminating impact of “The Turn” and “Task Jam” resulted in the inclusion of the leadership team online planning negotiations for the March 2015 meeting titled “Don’t Overwhelm Them” (Situation 4). Similarly, I wanted to include the leadership team’s final preparations for the initiative closing in “The Deliverables” (Situation 6) because of the different views that arose around the tensions of grant requirements in planning professional development funded by grant dollars.

I applied literary-based narrative inquiry through creative nonfiction to write the narrative of the initiative (Kim, 2016). Narratives are ways for “people to understand themselves, others, and the communities in which they participate” (Fredricksen, Wilhelm & Smith, 2012, p. 20), but also “narrative is about trouble and how people respond to it” (Fredricksen, 2012). This narrative inquiry revealed the trouble or disruption that entered the center of what Dewey (1938) termed interaction, situation, and continuity. Creative nonfiction appropriately documented disruptions and how they were resolved.

As a teacher, researcher, leadership team member, and participant, I wanted to understand the story behind planning a larger-scale National Writing Project professional development. I had been involved in various professional development implementation roles and witnessed several positive effects of the National Writing Project model. It was

now possible to discover something of what made this model effective and how this model influenced the planning of larger-scale professional development. Traditionally, stories include characters, settings, conflicts, and resolutions and these narrative elements became apparent within the Assignments Matter initiative situations.

In the situations that follow, I begin with a magnified section of the time-line shown in Figure 6 to orient the reader. I then introduce each initiative situation segment by describing it through the three dimensions of situation, continuity, and interaction.

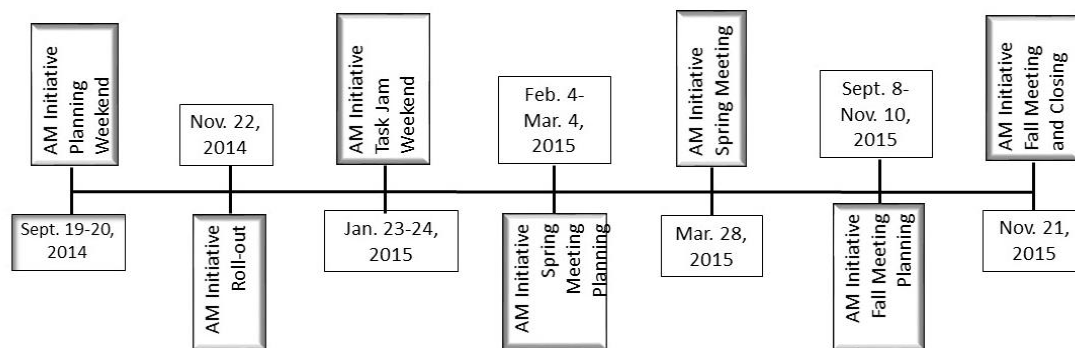


Figure 6. Initiative time-line

I summarize how the event is situated in the larger narrative context. Each situation represents part of the Assignments Matter initiative in which the leadership team comes together to plan professional development to reach one thousand educators over the course of a year and a half. To reach this many participants, the National Writing Project recruited the help of over twenty liaisons from Writing Project sites across the country.

Then I describe the continuity, which expresses the past and present experiences of those who are participating in the situation. The leadership team members came to the

initiative with varying levels of leadership experience in our schools, districts, and local Writing Projects; whereas, most liaisons were new to leadership opportunities.

To continue, I discuss interaction, which shows the present actions among the participants. Having worked together in different Writing Project capacities, we as teacher-leaders entered new roles as leadership team members in planning an initiative. Liaisons, most of them new to national work, navigated unknown territory in their relationships with us and with each other.

After describing the three dimensions within the segment, I identify the codes used in that situation and the narrative elements those codes are meant to highlight.

After a detailed introduction of how the situation is positioned in the larger context and the codes that are used in the situation narrative, I share the situation itself. The situation includes data from leadership team Google Hangout recordings, face-to-face leadership team planning meetings and debriefs, whole group meetings with liaisons, and personal interviews with individual leadership team members and liaisons. Public social media sites offer supporting contextual data. I italicize gerund and trait codes as they are first introduced in the situation and when they need to stand out from the text of the narrative.

After narrating the situation, I step out of the story again to analyze the findings in terms of back-talk and its disruptions to the situation. The Assignments Matter leadership team members negotiated fixed goals (the teaching of how to create meaningful writing assignments) with the previous leadership roles of the liaisons (what professional development planning experiences they had). Situations within this narrative inquiry and their associated back-talk appropriately illustrated this National

Writing Project initiative because stories and National Writing Project experiences are both intensely personal. Coping with back-talk became a team and liaison endeavor throughout the initiative.

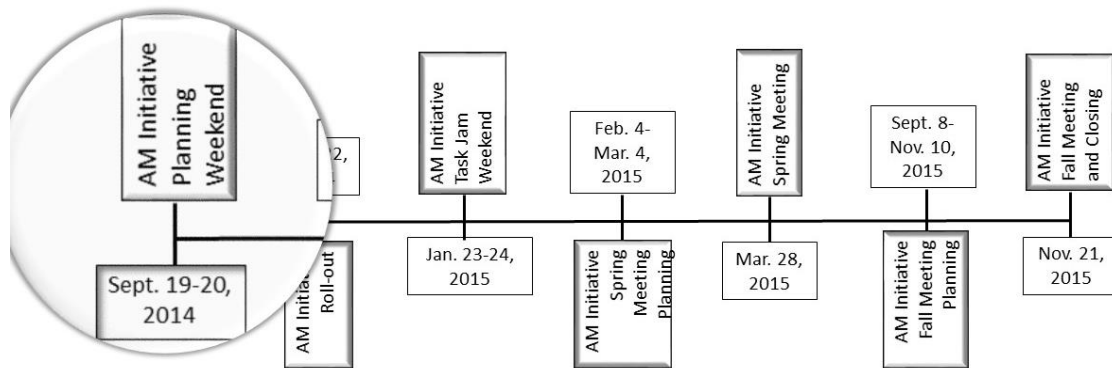


Figure 7. Time-line magnification of “What Are We Doing?” (Situation 1)

“What Are We Doing?” (Situation 1)

Situation

The first situation opens the narrative of the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative that began during a September weekend in 2014. At this first meeting, the National Writing Project Director of National Programs and the National Writing Project Program Manager introduce the Literacy Design Collaborative grant for which NWP had received money to extend the work of a previous initiative. At the table as leadership team members are Hank and Martin from the Northeast, Sasha and Aileen from the Midwest, and Jenny and Amy (the participant-observer) from the Southeast.

As the exposition of the initiative, this situation introduces the characters who figure prominently in the narrative. The exposition helps place the readers inside this first situation to understand the initiative’s beginning context as the point at which major

initiative decisions are made. These decisions include focusing on task development as the primary purpose of the professional development and selecting the means by which the community would become connected virtually.

Continuity

Leadership team members come to the Assignments Matter initiative with various levels of experience from the Literacy Design Collaborative and other Writing Project initiatives. As classroom teachers in our local districts, we explore leadership through opportunities with the National Writing Project and our local Writing Project sites. This initiative allows us to identify the specific skills we can use to develop a professional development plan to be implemented across the country.

Interaction

Leadership team members, having become friends through work in a previous initiative, encourage each other's ideas. Over the course of the weekend we outline initiative needs. We divvy up partner tasks for workshop time and come together to discuss our progress. The initiative appears to have a "magical" finish by the end of the weekend's planning.

Codes

For this situation, the trait codes *invitation* and *accept* describe how we entered into the initiative. The gerund codes *describing the initiative*, *thinking through personal contexts* and trait code *smart* describe the observable actions and characteristics of the narrative's setting and characters. The gerund code *describing the initiative* details the purpose of the initiative. The following gerund and trait codes describe how the initiative story began with our work together as a team: *experiencing collaboration in professional*

contexts, describing effective professional development, and feedback. Additionally, the trait code *magic* appears because some leadership team members use it to describe the planning process, and it becomes a recurring statement throughout the initiative.

“What Are We Doing?”—Storying the Initiative

Coffee and notebooks in hand, the eight of us claimed seats around the hotel conference room table to tackle the work ahead of us, not knowing exactly what that work was going to be. Responding to an email invitation from the previous month, we flew to Chicago on a Friday night in September from four different states. On Saturday morning, Hank, an eighth-grade language arts teacher from a northeastern state, spoke up and asked the question we were all wondering, "So, what are we doing here?"

Indeed, why had any six of us decided to take time from our over-filled teaching schedules to enlist ourselves as leadership team members in a National Writing Project initiative? Positive experiences in previous situations and meaningful interactions with interesting, intelligent people drove my desire for continuity with National Writing Project work. This desire mixed with curiosity led other Writing Project teachers like myself to respond to the vague email invitation of this new initiative:

I hope this letter finds you well and enjoying the last days of summer.

I am writing to you with an invitation to join a leadership team for a small project that is meant to extend the reach of LDC. The project will last approximately 18 months and will involve creating a blended, online learning experience through which we will share the task bank and the juring tools from LDC with many teachers.

For your service, NWP will pay a small stipend (\$2000), cover the expenses of all travel, and be very grateful. (personal communication, August 6, 2014)

A few of us had participated in other National Writing Project work where we met with colleagues across the nation to think about digital literacy, English Language

Learners, Expanding Our Offerings, Third Spaces, as well as other emerging topics in teaching writing and leadership development. Some of us also taught courses at local universities in addition to our middle or high school teaching positions. We knew the time involved in preparing presentations for our local writing project conferences and the challenges of planning and implementing professional development on teaching writing. Most recently, we had all worked with the National Writing Project on a Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) initiative to create modules aligned to the new Common Core State Standards, an experience of difficult and complicated work, frustration, and professional growth. Still, knowing the potential for challenges, frustration, time commitment, and hard work, we turned to the Director of National Programs at the National Writing Project and waited for her response to Hank's question. What exactly *were* we doing here?

Sam answered with a smile, "Well, we have some grant money to take a piece of the Literacy Design Collaborative and find a way to reach a thousand teachers in a year."

Assignments
Matter

1,000 people → LDC
↳ brilliant leaders
20 sites → 50 people
Digital tools. Connected communi

Sept LT

November LT + Liaisons (20)
* Training/Excitement building

★ January? LT + Liaisons (25) x 20
* EVENT

March? LT + Liaisons (leaders retreat)
→ Summer (Liaison + 25) x 20 [Local]

November 8-22 LT + Liaisons

A thousand. We counted again. Yes, there were six of us.

According to Sam, we were six brilliant leaders for twenty Writing Project site liaisons to reach a thousand educators.

Unlike what the code suggests, *describing the initiative* began with few details but two big

questions, so we started this situation with these to answer:

Figure 8. Initiative planning poster 1
"Brilliant Leaders," September 20, 2014

1. What is worth sharing?
2. How can we share it?

To help us dig into our personal thoughts about these two questions, Sam invited us to write about experiences from

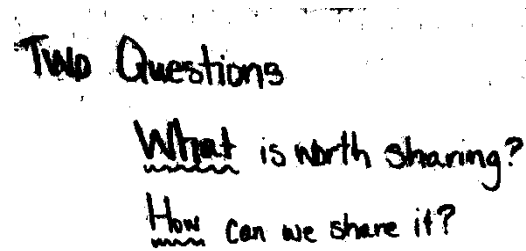


Figure 9. Initiative planning poster 2
 “Two Question,” September 20, 2014

our LDC work we thought were worth sharing. For us as leadership team members, our experiences were being valued in two ways. One, we were six of 106 people involved in the three-year LDC grant initiative who were now being *invited* to extend the work in a smaller grant opportunity. Two, the director had not formed a complete step-by-step plan for this smaller initiative but was *inviting* the six of us to share the experiences that we valued by encouraging us to *think through our personal contexts*. In response to Sam’s invitation, I wrote:

The other important part about writing a module was the feedback both informally from students (their responses to the tasks and engagement with the work) and formally from peers. Reading other people's modules helped me think about the mini-tasks in different ways. More importantly, each mini-task had a learning goal, and we had to think about how students would demonstrate their learning. (journal entry, September 19, 2014)

Planning collaboration and *feedback* as a way for participants to be part of a larger conversation was important to me and the leadership team because we had felt that sense of belonging in our earlier National Writing Project LDC situation. Hank described his experience of initially feeling intimidated when meeting people for the first time in LDC work, the precursor to our present initiative:

And there were professors from all over the place. It just seemed like a room full of really, really smart people, and I remember just sitting there going, "Don't say anything. Just listen. Shut up. Don't embarrass yourself." (interview, March 27, 2015)

It was only after he was invited to join the conversation and *experienced collaboration in a professional context* that he understood his role as one of the really smart people. He talked about how being welcomed into the conversation to collaborate made him feel *accepted*:

I would be part of the conversation too. And I was like, "Oh wow!" That's kind of interesting. So slowly but surely I would start participating a little bit because I didn't feel like I was going to be so out of place to speak. You know what I mean? Like I wasn't sure. Oh, they're actually interested in what everybody has to say, which was different, you know? (interview, March 27, 2015)

I did know. And Jenny reinforced what Hank said about feeling welcomed into and being "part of the conversation." Her experience with our leadership team began in a similar way: "When I said something that one time, then you guys were like, 'Okay.' And so that legitimized it and that made me feel like I could keep contributing" (leadership team debrief meeting, November 21, 2015). Legitimizing each other's words encouraged participation and collaboration in our earlier work together as participants and in our present capacity as leadership team members. So for us, in addition to invitation, a collaborative interaction was essential for the continuity of Writing Project experience—the experience of feeling as *smart* as anyone else in the room.

Martin elaborated on the depth that cannot be captured with the trait code *smart*:

It's not just the idea of being smart, it's also, the deeper Writing Project idea that we all actually have, through our experience; our eagerness (what Sam calls, "investment"); our reflection; our intelligence; our practice at listening, processing, and thinking something to contribute. In the Writing Project, we don't just hope everyone at the table will have something to add, we *believe* that they do and that it is important to organize the conversation in a way that will permit and encourage all to feel comfortable in sharing what they bring. (personal communication, February 7, 2016, italics in original)

We learned how important conversation was in our many other Writing Project experiences. This conversation would be important in our planning, for each other and for the participants experiencing the resulting professional development.

We decided that an initiative called Assignments Matter should focus on the actual writing of meaningful tasks, the assignments given to students at the end of LDC modules. Our new Twitter hashtag “tasksmatter” was born. After this decision, we filled posters with the grant outline, presentation ideas, schedule suggestions, professional development criteria, and backwards planning. With so many ideas taking the room by storm, we grounded ourselves by *describing the effective professional development* framework consistently implemented throughout any of the National Writing Project professional development offerings we had experienced or facilitated.

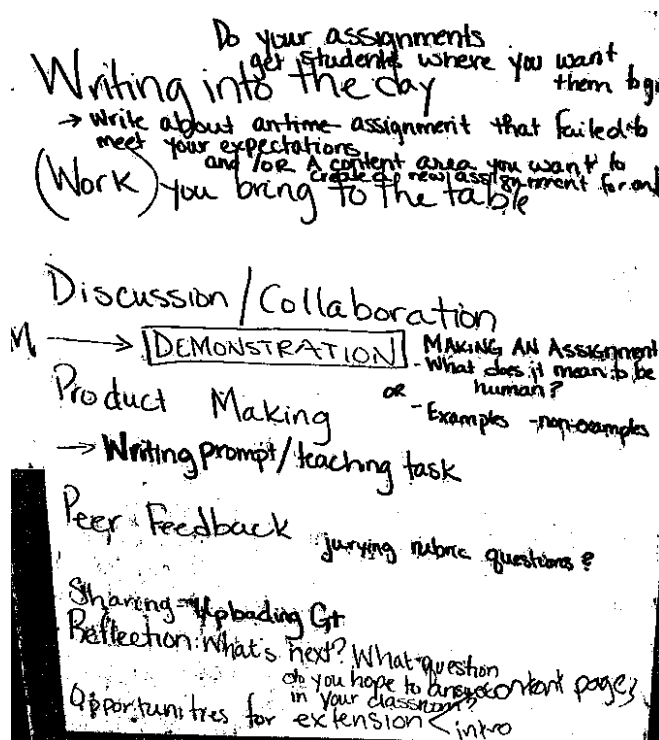


Figure 10. Initiative planning poster 3 “Day Outline,” September 20, 2014

The poster we created set up the day with segments familiar to us: writing into the day, looking at work the participant or leader brings to the table, participating in discussion and collaboration, making products, providing peer feedback on products, sharing the work, reflecting on the experience, and planning for extensions.

We framed the day with this question: Do your assignments get

your students where you want them to go? We super-imposed the following elements onto this professional development framework that we agreed were essential and worth the day's exploration: write about a time an assignment failed to meet your expectations, sample assignments/student work, making an assignment demo, writing prompt/teaching task, jurying rubric questions, uploading to Google Plus community, and what's next? The remainder of the weekend, we added content to this skeletal structure, ending with a decidedly accomplished piece of work to roll out to the twenty Writing Project site liaisons who would help us reach a thousand educators.

None of us knew in the beginning that we would be able to come up with a plan, or that the plan would work. At least a few times we returned to Hank's original question, "What are we doing here?" until it finally shifted to a more concrete, "What do we need to accomplish by each phase of the initiative?" Throughout the initiative, Sasha insisted this work was *magic*. She said, "I'm just always amazed at how you put teachers in a room and they figure it out. They do it and they figure it out, and this magic always seems to happen" (leadership team debrief meeting, November 21, 2015). We were those teachers in a conference room on a September weekend figuring things out, and at the end it did seem magical because our individual, partner, and whole group work had resulted in a concrete plan.

Several months later Sam provided her explanation for teacher *magic*:

We have a bunch of ideas on the table, how are we going to pick? Just holding that space for people to work it through, you know, kind of think about the costs and benefits of different choices. Then maybe write a little and then have another conversation. It works. I mean, it can't work any more quickly than it can work. It can't work if the people aren't pretty smart and really invested. (interview, March 27, 2015)

She did not name who needed to be “holding that space for people to work it through.” Someone at the table had to have the authority to hold open the space for working, thinking, writing, and talking. In our initiative, Sam as the director recognized that “it can’t work any more quickly than it can work.” She also saw the people she brought to the table as “pretty smart and really invested” and held open that space for us to plan and lead.

Sam said later, “It’s putting all the things you already know in place, so that people can be magical” (interview, March 27, 2015). These “things” involved more than a space for sharing, which Martin explained:

It’s the structure and the attitude.

Structure:

- 1) Bring the willing together,
- 2) Identify a goal,
- 3) Raise questions,
- 4) Hear from all,
- 5) Pull together the ideas,
- 6) New questions,
- 7) More ideas,
- 8) Focus the responses,
- 9) Find consensus.

The attitude:

- 1) Everyone here can and will contribute,
 - 2) All need to be heard,
 - 3) Something good will come from it.
- (personal communication, February 7, 2016)

This consistent structure and attitude threaded throughout our experiences with Writing Project leadership development had assured us of our abilities to bring valuable knowledge to the planning table.

Months later, I asked Sam what she thought were the most powerful aspects of our professional development planning. Her response recaptured two moments from that planning weekend:

And [Hank], "And we can blahblahblah." And he just spun off a bunch of things like, "here's how, you know, people will be networked and why that will be powerful" and dadada. And then there was this other moment near the end of the meeting where Sasha said, "We did it! I mean, we have a plan. I didn't see how we could get a plan. (interview, March 27, 2015)

Sasha's exclamation, "We did it!" after we exhausted the writing space on twelve posters during two planning days proved that we had "worked through," not magically accomplished, a promising plan. Sam acknowledged us as smart teacher-leaders. We had entered the conference room to become a leadership team. We left it with an initiative roll-out plan to show twenty liaisons how to reach a thousand educators.

Back-talk

This opening situation of the initiative, layered upon our previous interactions with each other during the Literacy Design Collaborative work, introduced the National Writing Project leadership team at their nervous beginning stages of planning an initiative. The work of that weekend and of the months ahead would provide opportunities for this team to collaborate, recognizing each individual's contribution and intelligence, but this situation troubled by the back-talk of inadequacy called for team members to legitimize each other's work to raise the efficacy of the group as a whole. As Martin pointed out, team members believed in the potential of the others at the table, but belief in themselves only came as a result of invitation.

Invitational space and collaboration offered a resolution to this trouble of back-talk. By inviting the leadership team members into the common space of the initiative and the space to plan collaboratively, Sam recognized the intelligence and the investment of the people in the room. The resulting work would appear magical, but it was the time

and space Sam allowed for us to work and write and think individually and collaboratively that led to the magical moment when Sasha could say, “We did it!”

Even though we were describing and planning effective professional development, it would not always maintain a magical course throughout the initiative. What would happen when nervous interactions disrupted this Writing Project continuity?

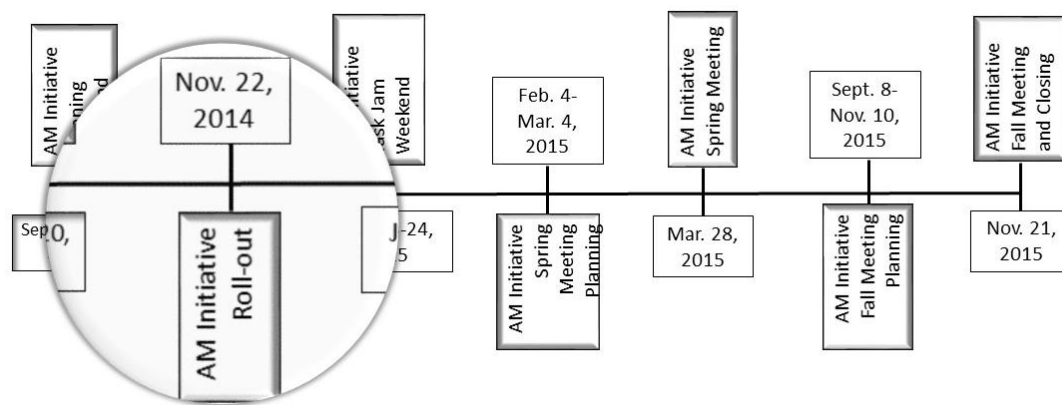


Figure 11. Time-line magnification of “The Turn” (Situation 2)

“The Turn” (Situation 2)

Situation

The second situation continues the Assignments Matter initiative narrative with the roll-out meeting on November 22, 2014 to over twenty Writing Project site liaisons from across the country. In October and November, leadership team members met on Google Hangout to fine-tune the plan that had been created during the September planning weekend. This meeting day begins as part explanation, part demonstration, and part planning in preparation for what the liaisons would implement at their local sites on Saturday, January 24, 2015. Conflict enters the narrative when the successful

collaborative workshop atmosphere shifts to anxiety as the day ends and liaisons feel unprepared to lead the workshop in their own settings.

Continuity

Leadership team members, having experienced the previous situation of working on the Literacy Design Collaborative initiative, planned a roll-out of the task portion of the LDC module. However, many liaisons entering the initiative are new to leadership and most are not familiar with the Literacy Design Collaborative task templates. This unbalanced continuity of experiences clashes when liaisons, nervous about the initiative requirements, push back in spite of our detailed plans and demonstrations.

Interaction

After a day of experiencing explanations, demos, and reflections, the liaisons question their roles as leaders in the initiative. Our presentations position us as leaders handing over a task for someone else to do. Sam eases these interactions by showing our community unity in the initiative.

Codes

In this situation, these gerund and trait codes introduce the liaisons into the initiative narrative: *experiencing NWP invitation* and *invitation*. To capture the conflict and the reasons for the conflict, the gerund code *asking what is NWP?* and trait code *struggle* indicate trouble is developing in the narrative. The trait code *smart*, first discussed in situation one, shows how the conflict is partially resolved. The trait codes *trust* and *empowerment* are introduced in this situation because their developing theme in the narrative begins here.

“The Turn”—Storying the Initiative

Our roles rehearsed, slide presentations polished, and nerves in check, we entered the tight meeting space on November 22, 2014 to roll out the Assignments Matter initiative to more than twenty liaisons from twenty sites across the country. Chairs shifted and bumped as the leadership team and liaisons maneuvered between tables to the buffet of bagels, hard-boiled eggs, and fruit. At each table, people introduced themselves as they plugged in laptops and cleared spaces for coffee. As leadership team members found seats around the room and entered conversations with site representatives, Martin said he spotted our first sign of trouble before the meeting even began. Later, he told us during our debrief that afternoon:

I kept thinking about [an] earlier conversation when I asked somebody and they said, "I don't know. My director said you're going to this." And I thought, "Are they all going to be saying, 'I'm here because my director said'?" (leadership team debrief, November 22, 2014)

“I’m here because my director said” contrasted with the National Writing Project’s mission of teachers teaching teachers through an *invitation* to leadership. Because of their inexperience with leadership, the liaisons within the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative were chosen by their Writing Project site directors for what might have been considered a lower-risk leadership role. Sam explained the Writing Project site directors’ possible rationales:

Well, so, I think that for several liaisons this has been their first leadership opportunity at their site, so, so one thing that's interesting is that this size or where you have to do two one-day professional developments and a lot of it is supplied for you feels like a kind of small step that a lot of Writing Project directors are like, "Oh, I can give this to someone who I think has a lot of potential but hasn't done a big piece of work yet." (interview, August 20, 2015)

But Sam imagining the directors saying, “I can give this to someone” showed a shift in focus from *invitation* to summons.

Yet invitation fostered *trust* and *empowered* the invited individuals to push themselves to enter confidently into new interactions, evidenced by the invitations experienced by the leadership team members. Jenny connected invitation to *trust* and *empowerment* in her description of National Writing Project work:

I mean I feel empowered when I get invited to do things. Not, I mean, first of all because this huge entity trusts me to put me on a plane somewhere, to spend money, to feed me, to put me in a really nice hotel. That's amazing. Then they trust to hear my ideas . . . when you're in a room with all these educated people, it makes you feel like your ideas are so valued, and you can share what you do in your little town in [my state] with these people who work at this university, and what you do is just as important as what they do. (interview, March 25, 2015)

Invitations extended with trust empowered Jenny to share ideas from her “little town” with “all these educated people” from a large university. She identified a part of trust as being seen worthy of pampering in a “really nice hotel.” She described the other part of trust as how “educated people” valued what she did “as important as what they do.”

At the time, the leadership team members did not know how the liaisons became involved the initiative. After I learned that the liaisons’ recruitment was a little different from the leadership team members’ invitations, I asked the team about their own experiences with invitation. Jenny reflected on *experiencing the NWP invitation*:

So that idea of invitation I think is really important. I think because so often we're, you know, things are demanded of us. Our time is, [school administrators'] expectations of us . . . And I feel like everything about the Writing Project feels like it's done with appreciation. And so those invitations are just another acknowledgment of, “Here's this I noticed about you and I would like you to be a part of this because I appreciate you as a professional and I feel like you should, I would, I would like to be a part of this community with you.” (interview, December 6, 2015)

As Jenny said, an invitation brings people together as a “part of this community.” Many liaisons did not enter a community to work alongside the directors who had asked them to join the initiative. Instead, they were sent off to meet with leadership team members who were not formally involved with their recruitment.

Jenny’s description of invitations as special acknowledgments introduced the importance of invitation semantics, which Sasha further described:

I think that the language of inviting someone to do something kind of prompts people to feel like they're a part of something that is bigger than they are. And I think it makes people feel special. You know, like, “Ew, I'm being invited to this thing. Cool.” (interview, January 6, 2016)

The Assignments Matter initiative was an invitation to something bigger, something on a national scale to reach a thousand educators during the next twelve months of the grant. Without the language of invitation, some liaisons may have felt demands similar to what Jenny described as “school administrators’ expectations,” which were so different from the appreciativeness embedded within National Writing Project experiences described by leadership team members.

Martin described a similar feeling of empowerment and belonging during our conversation at the initiative’s end. He said, “And it's powerful to feel that you've been given a place at the table. You come here and you're like, you have a place at the table of the National Writing Project, you know?” (interview, November 20, 2015). “A place at the table” suggested a sense of belonging as well as mutual respect. Being seated at the same table as a national organization such as the National Writing Project would be a special opportunity to learn together.

Many liaisons who answered the request, invitation or not, entered the meeting room with similar experiences as Mike who said, “I’ve collaborated to put together

workshops before, but I'd never done one where I was the entire front man, especially for a whole group of teachers" (liaison interview, November 20, 2015). Because most liaisons had few prior leadership roles and minimal experience planning their own professional development workshops, the leadership team members planned the November meeting as a workshop demonstration of the Literacy Design Collaborative task development template tools, modeling for them the January 24, 2015 professional development day that we spontaneously and in fun named a "task jam." These twenty-nine templates, categorized by argumentative, informational, and narrative writing, offered structured scaffolding for creating well-worded tasks.

Sam's November 22 professional development roll-out introduction at the beginning of the day placed the initiative's work within the context of studies by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The following notes accompanied one of her opening slides:

Research shows that teachers who give students assignments requiring authentic intellectual work see greater gains on standardized tests (Newmann, Bryk, and Nagaoka 2001). Such work is similar to the type of problem solving that adults face in their everyday lives and helps prepare students to be critical, analytical thinkers. (Assignments Matter initiative roll-out presentation, November 22, 2014)

This research information and Sam's personal stories of working with effective and ineffective writing assignments explained the reasons for focusing on the writing assignments and not the instructional ladder.

Though eager to learn about the project, liaisons did not know what to expect in a grant initiative. Many of the liaisons only had classroom teaching or single-session professional development experiences, so they were not aware of all the pieces of planning an event including who to recruit, where to meet, or technology to troubleshoot,

which were some of the *struggles* the liaisons had with the initiative. Other struggles were more philosophical. The leadership team was not prepared for some of the *struggles* liaisons would have. This was apparent when, at the end of the meeting, the liaisons' uncertain voices filled the background while the camera focused on my reflection activity.

The first liaison, unsteadied us when she spoke of the National Writing Project vision and mission and questioned how they aligned with the structure imposed by the LDC templates used in the initiative:

Maintaining kind of the foundation or the ideological elements of Writing Project works because this seems like . . . kind of a departure from a lot of those things [in NWP Summer Institute]. And how are we able to articulate some of that Writing Project fundamental pieces of why we write to people that may not have that kind of, they haven't been exposed to Writing Project or even, for that matter, know what it is? So I'm just curious as to, like, what is the hierarchy as to how we, how we give this to a broader audience as [what] the collaborative or the Writing Project work is. (liaison 1, question-answer session, November 22, 2014)

The liaison questioned the hierarchy that she saw existing between the National Writing Project and the Literacy Design Collaborative. Many Writing Project sites pushed against formulaic instruction, including task design. She wanted to know which organization took precedence in work stamped as a Writing Project initiative. She also wanted to know how to articulate the “Writing Project fundamental pieces of why we write” or how to promote the “Writing Project way” through such a structured template. This liaison's struggle with negotiating these two frameworks—NWP professional development framework and the LDC template tasks—prompted the code *asking what is NWP?* We as the leadership team members saw that different Writing Project sites, networks, and members might have different answers to that question. During this day's initiative roll-out, we had presented our interpretations of the “NWP way” through

demonstrations and workshop-style professional development. However, this question would surface again over the course of the initiative.

Beyond negotiating NWP versus LDC teaching writing philosophies, liaisons questioned their capacity to lead a day of professional development in the midst of tight work schedules and final exams. This liaison discussed the logistics of the January 24th date and the *struggle* of how to engage the participants who might attend: “It's the day after our final exams. Am I going to be able to engage anybody intellectually at that time? So my question is what exactly do you want us to do then?” (liaison 5, question-answer session, November 22, 2014). The Assignments Matter initiative required one thousand participants in the professional development offerings over the course of a year. These educators would participate in a “task jam” during which they would examine their writing assignments, work through the template task writing assignment criteria, partner with peers to revise the assignment, and leave the day with a well-written task. The expected participant number for the January 24th task jam was five hundred educators. The question the liaison posed, “What exactly do you want us to do then?” might very well have meant, “How are we going to meet our numbers?” in addition to the more event-oriented, “What do you want me to do with disengaged participants?”

The question of “who?” continued when one liaison asked about the audience we were targeting for this complex work: “Then I guess my question is who are we servicing? And [what] exactly does that service look like at the end?” (liaison 8, question-answer session, November 22, 2014). Another liaison questioned the “who?” of content areas and how she might engage other content areas in the assignment-writing process. The Assignments Matter initiative focused solely on designing effective writing

assignments, and knowledge in that content area could be beneficial for the leader of the professional development workshop. This liaison bluntly stated her concerns:

I would feel really comfortable guiding language arts teachers through this. I would have some hesitancy about content teachers because I think I can bullshit enough to direct them. [laughter] But I don't want it to be artificial or in-genuine because I, the process is important. (liaison 6, question-answer session, November 22, 2014)

She struggled between inviting numerous participants of any content area (and meeting the required numbers) and inviting only participants from content areas most comfortable for the liaison to lead. Her ability to “bullshit enough to direct [content-area teachers]” would be artificial, which might diminish the importance of the work and her credibility as a professional development provider.

The tension in the room increased with each question the liaisons raised. From participant numbers and content areas, the liaisons moved to instructional design. Knowing the importance of instructional strategies, liaisons questioned the validity of narrowly focusing on only the writing of tasks:

So when we're writing these assignments, it's kind of the end product, which I think teachers right now are kind of okay with. They're okay with some of the end products and they're missing the little pieces. (liaison 5, question-answer session, November 22, 2014)

The January task jam would not include the instruction leading up to the assignment, only the narrow focus of task creation, revision, peer review, and task revision as we had decided in our September meeting two months earlier. This liaison pondered the meaningfulness these tasks would have for a new teacher unfamiliar with the work's background. In these anxious moments during the question-answer session, the liaison had forgotten Sam's earlier presentation. The informative, contextual pieces of focusing

on the tasks themselves had become lost between the earlier success of the workshop and the later anxiety of how to implement that workshop at their own sites.

The liaisons worried, too, about how to share this work with administrators and recruits, as this liaison stated:

I find value in this, but I feel like I don't have a concrete,
"Here's the mission statement,"
"Here's the goal of the program,"
"Here's why you need this,"
"Here's why you need to come to this day."
(liaison 7, question-answer session, November 22, 2014)

What, exactly, was the mission? Although the liaisons signed on for this initiative and the challenges it would bring, they *struggled* with unforeseen obstacles. The liaisons could not envision the January 24th task jam even after the leadership team demonstrations.

Even weeks after the meeting, tensions revealed themselves again through the transcript text. After reviewing the transcript from that day, Sasha offered insights about the events. She identified fear as more than what the liaisons felt, but as part of the struggles all teachers face in the field of education:

What stands out for me is the amount of fear all of us teachers have about doing things "right" - whatever that means. Most of what we discuss has to do with fear: the participants' fear, our fear of the participants "turning" on us, our fear of really doing LDC, our fear of not doing LDC, our fear of not being able to pull people into the conversation.

It seems that most of what we did that day is talk each other off the ledge and process our fears. We spent a ton of time saying "I'm fearful" - and replying with "yah, but...you handled it well because you did this or this." It seems that so much of what we do in education is this. We are fearful and insecure for a lot of different reasons because we understand that the stakes are high, so we build communities that understand our fears to walk into the dark together to illuminate those fears and work through them together. (personal communication, January 24, 2015)

Sasha said we “build communities . . . to walk into the dark together,” which signaled again the importance of *invitation* as a way to be a “part of this community” that Jenny described earlier. As co-members in this community, our responsibility was to talk the liaisons off the ledge.

One way to help the liaisons envision this professional development in their own contexts was to reinforce the goals of the initiative and set them up as doable actions. Sam positioned her responses to the liaisons’ questions as “rally the troops” reassurances to give the liaisons confidence in themselves and in the tasks ahead. She assured everyone in the meeting space that we were all part of the initiative community, a community of teachers. She addressed them saying:

In a way, I put this proposal in as a sort of in-your-face move to the [grant-funding organization] to say, "Geez." Everything that people want to say about teachers is, "They're not smart enough. They don't have enough stuff. They're desperate. They're needy. They're sinking." And it's not my experience. Over and over again, I go around the country. I go to Writing Project sites, and I see teachers wherever they are, together, figuring stuff out. And I wanted money to say, "We can do this. We can figure this out." (question-answer session, November 22, 2014)

She countered other people’s views of teachers as “not smart enough” by saying, “it’s not my experience.” Sam underscored the importance of our interactions as *smart* teachers within the National Writing Project community. Her words, “I see teachers wherever they are, together, figuring stuff out” reminded the liaisons that they had been spending all day with the leadership team “figuring stuff out.” And the liaisons would later lead a professional development day for other smart teachers who would be working together in the same way.

In these few words, she shifted the language of summons back to *invitation*. By inspiring confidence, Sam modeled for us what she had been coached to do by her

Writing Project mentors. Several months later, she explained how she was able to do this:

I've been given confidence in those moments when it feels like "oh." I did have, you know, I have an ever-growing lifetime supply now of experiences where I've had that feeling before. So the experiences let me take on more experiences like that. They also help me know how to recognize when people are feeling a little uncomfortable or afraid because I, you know, because I have. And I've been taught or coached or questioned or supported through that experience. (interview, August 20, 2015)

The continuity of “oh” experiences in which she had been “uncomfortable or afraid” enabled Sam to empathize with the liaisons who were afraid in those moments during the initiative roll-out. Martin provided further insight into the role the Writing Project had in developing Sam’s leadership. He wrote, “WP has been about believing in the ability of teachers and recognizing that to help them push through their fears is to open the organization to all they have to offer” (personal communication, February 7, 2016). Layered upon Sam’s “oh” experiences were situations in which she had witnessed smart teachers across the country “figuring stuff out.” Sam spoke from her continuity of experiences with this invitation to liaisons: “We can do this. We can figure this out.” “We” as leaders of this initiative and “we” as smart teachers could work through the struggles together.

Back-talk

This situation introduced the back-talk conflict that threaded through the course of the initiative. The situation’s back-talk was the disruption in expectations the liaisons had about the initiative work. More accurately, many liaisons came to the initiative not knowing what to expect or what their roles might be. Although the expectations were

made more clear, the clarity of those expectations were more intimidating than the not knowing.

As Sasha noted, the liaisons feared engaging in the reconceptualization of our day's work for use in their own Writing Project site contexts. Reconceptualization would enable them to both inquire into the tools we presented and reflect on how to use those tools in a new situation. This initiative required them to take this professional development planning task, apply their previous leadership experiences, and re-envision the task as their own workshop to lead. The liaisons' lack of continuity in experiencing past or present leadership experiences caused the back-talk of fear, breaking the reflective inquiry cycle. The self-efficacy needed for engaging in productive inquiry responsive to the needs of the initiative was incomplete, potentially stalling the initiative's development.

Back-talk was also the doubt the liaisons had in us as well as themselves. Being unfamiliar with us or the work of the initiative weakened the initial interactions the liaisons had with us at our first meeting together. Lacking leadership experiences and not knowing the continuity of experiences the leadership team members shared with each other, liaisons had little reason for believing in us. The team members' teaching and leading experiences within the Writing Project network provided us with the layers of situations, the continuity, we needed in order to have confidence to co-lead the initiative alongside the director. The director's continuity of leadership experiences, mentored by other leaders within the National Writing Project, enabled her to address the back-talk within this situation to turn the room back around. She engaged the liaisons with

language to build their confidence as leaders and invited them to work alongside us in this professional development initiative.

With fear and doubt in our midst and the first major participant event in the initiative only two months away, would the liaisons be ready to take on the challenge of leading a professional development with national eyes watching?

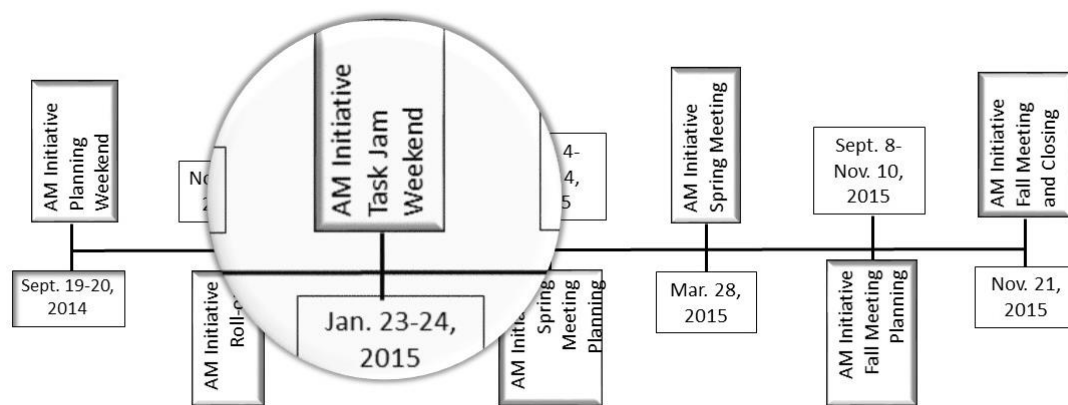


Figure 12. Time-line magnification of “Task Jam” (Situation 3)

“Task Jam” (Situation 3)

Situation

The third situation continues the Assignments Matter initiative narrative with emails among the leadership team members immediately before the task jam day of January 24, 2015 during which participants would examine writing assignments, work with the Literacy Design Collaborative template tasks, peer review their revisions, and create new and improved writing tasks. The situation includes leadership team debriefings about the experience. This is the first time sites across the country are coordinated to facilitate professional development on the same day, and recorded live-

streaming audiovisual sessions with Google Hangout on Air are arranged for Writing Project sites to check in with National and speak with assigned leadership team members. Most leadership team members stay in contact via Twitter or Google Plus in addition to designated “hangout” times.

To illustrate an important situation in the narrative’s rising action, this situation shows partial resolution of a conflict introduced in the second situation. Here, expectations become disrupted in a different and more satisfactory way, providing hope for smooth planning in later initiative situations.

Continuity

The liaisons’ turn during the November 2014 meeting prompts careful planning of the January 24, 2015 task jam professional development sessions across the country. The leadership team members have various levels of experience facilitating an online meeting. And the liaisons work to pull off a face-to-face workshop in spite of poor weather conditions. Nervous about the live check-ins with various sites via Google Hangout on Air, leadership team members think through our experiences facilitating online meetings.

Interaction

Leadership team members send last-minute emails in preparation for the online Google Hangout check-ins. The evening before the January 24, 2015 task jam day across the country proves to be a nervous time for many team members, and we encourage each other by lending ongoing support for the following day. Participants in the liaisons’ task jam professional development sessions share their positive experiences with collaboration, and directors praise the efforts of liaisons at their sites.

Codes

In this situation, the gerund code *describing effective professional development* shows this situation's setting and characters. The gerund code *learning leadership capacity*, and the trait code *feedback* capture the observable action and characteristics that begin to resolve conflicts from the trouble described in the second situation. The trait codes *power* and *empowerment* show how the day's success affects the participants.

“Task Jam”—Storying the Initiative

Fri, Jan 23, 2015 at 8:36 PM

Hi all, Sorry to send this note so late. We are very excited to see what happens tomorrow, though somewhat trepidatious about the possible east coast snow storm.

If you have any questions or run into any technical troubles, feel free to call me.

Here are some general questions to ask when leading the report out from sites. Feel free to add ideas and also to free style:

How's it going there? What's the most exciting thing you've learned today? Most challenging? Do you have any assignments/tasks to share? Who's impressed you today? why? How will your work today impact your classroom? What/how might you share with others? Where would you like to see this work go next?

So excited to hang out with you all tomorrow.
Thank you for everything! Sam

Fri, Jan 23, 2015 at 8:40 PM

Sounds great!!! I'm looking forward to tomorrow!
Thank you, Sam, for the questions... Aileen

Fri, Jan 23, 2015 at 8:59 PM

Gotcha. Talk to you all tomorrow!!
Sent from my iPhone (Jenny)

Fri, Jan 23, 2015 at 9:05 PM

Aileen, your confidence is inspiring. I, for one, am terrified. Mostly, no, exclusively, by the technology. I can certainly lead a discussion in person and, Sam, your questions will certainly stimulate a good conversation, but when it comes to hangouts I'm the kid on a bent-wheeled

tricycle while everyone else is on a titanium alloy racing bike.

Where will I find this hangout? Who will be joining the conversation? How do I capture it for us? At what point of [the liaison's] day are we holding this conversation? What other questions should I be asking that I should know but I don't know I don't know?

Hmm, that last question definitely sounds like panic.

Any help would be appreciated. Tomorrow I expect to have my computer on my lap, my landline in my left hand with Sam's number ready to go and my cell phone in my right set for [Program Manager]. Should be, uh, fun!

Martin

Fri, Jan 23, 2015 at 9:09 PM

Martin!!! I so appreciate your honesty! I don't have the answer to all of your questions, but it's my understanding that [Program Manager] will send links to all of the hangouts 10 minutes prior to the start time. This should help...

Also, here's my number if you need anything! See you tomorrow!!!

Aileen

Fri, Jan 23, 2015 9:14 pm

Martin, You asked the questions I had... and cell phone is at the ready!

Cheers :-) Amy

Fri, Jan 23, 2015 at 9:33 PM

Thanks, Amy. I'm hoping it's just opening night jitters.

I'll bet the leaders around the country are even more jittery than we are (well, maybe not than I am) Martin

Fri, Jan 23, 2015 at 10:04 PM

Ok.... See everyone in the intertubes

Yours sincerely,

Hank

On Jan 23, 2015, at 7:00 PM

Hi Sam, Will a link be posted on G+ or via email (or both) to connect to the hangout? The thread to some of those conversations is getting lost in my email/gmail.

So exciting! Amy--Sent from my iPad

Sat, Jan 24, 2015 at 8:05 AM

[Program Manager] will let you know ASAP
Sent from my iPhone
Sam

Sat, Jan 24, 2015 at 8:09 AM

Hi Amy, I'll both call you through the hangout and
send you an email with the link. Talk to you soon!
[Program Manager]

Sat, Jan 24, 2015 at 8:04 AM

Hi Martin, I'm about to leave for the office, so see
you online soon. Later, [Program Manager] will answer
your question about the easiest way to find the hangout.
Not to freak you out, but these are all hangouts on air, so
they are all recorded.

In your hangout will be all the teachers from [the
liaison's] group, you, me, Aileen, and some other members
of the LT who I'm forgetting right now (sorry). It's 1 pm for
[the liaison's] team.

If more questions occur, keep them coming. I'm
driving to the office now, so [Program Manager] and I can
hangout together. See you soon. Sam-Sent from my iPhone

Sat, Jan 24, 2015 at 8:16 AM

Wow, while I slumbered you all were SUPER
busy!! I am here and I am ready to roll...
Let's do this...See you all soon...Sasha

The story of the cold, snowy Saturday in January began months before these
frantic emails among the leadership team members. The leadership team started planning
during a weekend in September, continued our discussions via online meetings each
month, and survived a scary turn during the November roll-out to over twenty Writing
Project liaisons. In some ways similar to the liaisons' anxiety about leading professional
development, these emails showed our eagerness for a smoothly-run January 24, 2015
task jam, knowing site participants across the country would be working nearly
simultaneously for the first time to improve writing assignments. We named this task

creation and revision professional development day while humming “Pump up the Jam” and hoped participants would also have fun “jamming” their tasks with new thinking partners while working with the Literacy Design Collaborative task templates.

Leadership team members who hosted Google Hangouts on Air glimpsed work in progress when sites called in at their appointed time to discuss their day or questions they might have, and participants witnessed collaboration across the country when they logged in to watch the recordings. Because these events would be recorded, we wanted to present ourselves as eloquent and well-informed when responding to any questions they asked. Our nervous emails showed we might be equally as satisfied with just being able to present ourselves at all.

To get a sense of the highlights or lows of the day, the leadership team debriefed this experience in later Google Hangout calls. Hank summarized the main outcomes he noticed from the Google Plus community site:

I noticed that, I mean, the tasks that were coming out of it, when you sort of sat back and think that was happening over this really wide space, right? It was with people that hadn't done a lot of this stuff before. There were things that were coming out of it, the tasks that were really well-written. Some of them, I thought they were good. Wasn't a complete failure. (leadership team Google Hangout, February 4, 2015)

Hank's observation that the professional development “wasn't a complete failure” for people who “hadn't done a lot of this stuff before” eased the primary concern expressed by the leadership team members throughout the planning process. The initial positive results that some of the participants' posted tasks “were really well-written” helped further ease that concern.

Teachers across the country collaboratively created new tasks, provided *feedback* for improvement, and shared tasks in an online space. Mike described his approach to planning and implementing the task jam professional development:

I want teachers to feel like they can make a unit today that they can teach by the end of the school year, right? And then get real feedback. [The task jam] can be almost all work. It's almost all teachers talking to each other about their lessons. (liaison interview, November 20, 2015)

Teachers “talking to each other” and getting “real feedback” on their lessons achieved what Sam had expressed to the liaisons during our initial face-to-face meeting in November:

If on January 24th, 500 teachers around the country said, "That was fun. I've got a new thing I'm going to try in my classroom and I've got new colleagues to try it with" then we've succeeded. That's my goal. (question-answer session, November 22, 2014)

Teachers collaborated and had fun sharing their knowledge as these three tweets from the Twitter feed (#tasksmatter) for the initiative showed: “Thanks to @l_m & T A for hosting the #TasksMatter @NWPKS Task Jam this morning” (J.K., January 24, 2015); “@jzkTeach @NWPKS A great day of learning & discussing Assignments Matter! Glad you were there to share your knowledge! #tasksmatter” (L.M., January 24, 2015); “#tasksmatter has made a difference to my teaching. Thanks K. and B. and colleagues for #legitPD” (K.T., January 24, 2015). Public acknowledgment of a “great day of learning and discussing” and a “legitPD” affirmed the work of the leadership team and liaisons in their planning for this professional development day. One participant tweeted that using the “#tasksmatter” protocol of focusing tightly on crafting meaningful assignments “made a difference” to her teaching. Twitter paved a new way of *describing effective professional development* in succinct language.

In addition to the type of affirmation online social media provided, a Writing Project director confirmed the excitement at one site as Sam shared:

I can tell you that I was on a call with the director at N. Writing Project and . . . we would have said from our point-of-view they struggled a little bit to figure out the details and get everything going. And the director was like, "That's astonishing. That NWP has done to develop the funding. And can you get more to us? And what more can we do? And It's amazing!" (leadership team Google Hangout, February 18, 2015)

"Our point of view" had been limited to what we witnessed during the tense November roll-out, informational email correspondence, and online check-ins with volunteering sites during the day's task jam. But that Writing Project director expressed excitement at the task jam's potential: "What more can we do? It's amazing!" The task jam sessions held January 24, 2015 by twenty Writing Project sites across the country *empowered* liaisons and their directors like the one at this site to seek more opportunities for similar roles and funding. The leadership team members, having not fully recovered from the liaisons' anxious "turn" during the November 22, 2014 roll-out, exclaimed relief.

The posted pictures, charts, and tasks on the Google Plus community gave the leadership team the sense that this nationwide one-day professional development had been different than other one-shot learning opportunities that often fizzled once the day was over. A few months later, Sam described some of the longer-lasting effects of the January 24th task jam that directors continued to share with her:

And I have been struck--I've had five phone calls from directors who said, "Thank you so much for that. It has done so much." How can a one-day professional development on writing tasks, how can that do that? But they say the same thing. People had fun. People learned about the Writing Project. More people have applied for our summer institute. People have asked us to come to our school and do this so we've got a professional development contract. People want to get together again and do a next step after they teach their task. (interview, March 27, 2015)

These directors were not necessarily *describing effective professional development* that typically included long-term, ongoing, embedded teacher development in classroom settings but rather were describing the ongoing curiosity participants had for digging deeper into tasks.

In thinking forward to future possibilities, one of the liaisons, Mike, described how he and his administrator approached recruitment for the initiative:

I relied on an administrator in our building to help with logistics . . . We were trying to get teachers at schools that were [lower-achieving], trying to get younger teachers involved, and then hopefully we'll kind of see that tie back and they'll become TCs at some point. (liaison interview, November 20, 2015)

Mike and his administrator could see the Assignments Matter LDC task templates as useful for less experienced teachers and the initiative as an introduction for teachers to the Writing Project Invitational Summer Institutes to become teacher consultants (TCs). Sites and participants alike needed next steps. Participants' first experiences with tasks had been in a fun and collaborative environment, and they asked for more experiences like that because, for them, this one had been effective.

The fun Sam and the directors described contrasted sharply with the fear that caused such trouble—such a disruption in expectations—in November during the planning stages of the task jams. Before experiencing the task jam professional development successes, the liaisons feared their possible failures. Sam talked about fears she had faced while on the path to her current job as Director of National Programs at the National Writing Project. Her past experiences provided her with a personal perspective for leadership team members and liaisons entering new leadership territory. She explained:

You know it's scary, but you keep having these experiences where you walk up to that scariness, and then you do it, and then you're on the other side of it, and you realize you can do things you didn't know you could do. So, yeah, it keeps being scary, but you ha- you build this repertoire of experiences that it's okay to be scared, and it's okay to do something you're not quite sure you can do because you've done that before, and no disaster has happened. (interview, March 27, 2015)

The leadership team “walked up to that scariness” of planning a large-scale professional development to be implemented by sites across the nation. They reached “the other side” of January 24th’s task jam professional development. As Hank said, it “wasn’t a complete failure,” and when we were on the other side of the experience, we saw that “no disaster [had] happened.” Through the experience of coming out unscathed on the other side of grand event came the *learning of leadership capacity* for both leadership team members and liaisons. Some liaisons, *empowered* by leading collaborative workshops in which participants gave each other feedback on writing assignments, sought additional leadership roles. Participants submitted tasks on the shared community space and saw power in the collaborative process of developing new and improved assignments for their students.

And Martin discovered his metaphorical titanium alloy racing bike while facilitating a Google Hangout on Air with Aileen. She tweeted, “Thank you @Martin for posing excellent questions at the @WPEDucators #tasksmatter Hangout! #reflectiveteacher” (Aileen, January 24, 2015). *Empowered* by planning these professional development experiences, leadership team members entered the next phase of the initiative—to plan the March meeting. So with the same spirit in Sasha’s earlier words emailed to us on the brink of a new experience: “Let’s do this.”

Back-talk

This situation described the first milestone for the Assignments Matter initiative, which was the January 24th task jam professional development to create, peer review, and revise meaningful writing assignments for immediate classroom use. The back-talk of fear and doubt from the liaisons' turn the previous November lingered, and with hours of professional development planning behind us, we still approached Saturday's task jam professional development with trepidation. This underlying nervousness, apparent in the emails, was less fearful than the liaisons' turn and more anticipatory and hopeful for their successes. Even after all the day's events ended, we could not breathe the sigh of relief until we heard feedback from the sites. We measured the success in not failing, as Hank pointed out.

The task jam as an effective professional development was set in a workshop-style setting anchored by the specific and detailed materials on the small focus area of task creation. Aligning with the National Writing Project plan for effective professional development smoothed the liaisons' transition from learning leadership to being leaders. Meaningful collaboration among participants in the sessions prompted positive feedback about the experience. Beyond the leadership team's planning and support, the positive experiences within the liaisons' local settings empowered them with the confidence they needed to step up to the fears they had expressed in November. With eager participants around them and national support from the leadership team behind them, they faced the scary experience of implementing a professional development plan on their own and discovered that no disaster had happened.

Positive feedback gave us the fortitude for continuing the planning work with the same energy as we began. Our next task would be to plan our March meeting with the liaisons. Would we be able to keep our forward momentum? Or would the challenges of agreeing on next steps disrupt interactions within the situation?

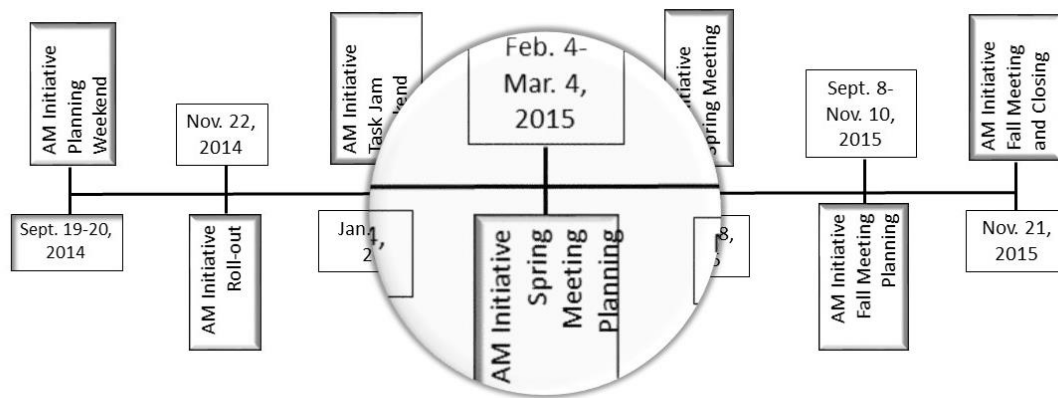


Figure 13. Time-line magnification of “Don’t Overwhelm Them” (Situation 4)

“Don’t Overwhelm Them” (Situation 4)

Situation

The fourth situation follows the leadership team members through the months of February and March as we plan the National Writing Project Spring Meeting with liaisons that would take place March 28, 2015. Having received numerous positive reports about the task jam sessions held on January 24, 2015, the leadership team members negotiate the planning of liaisons’ next steps in the initiative. On the table are options to jury the tasks already submitted or move discussion to the task instructional ladder or some combination of the two.

Struggles and negotiations disrupt the leadership team’s forward momentum, creating back-talk in the initiative’s narrative. This situation focuses on interactions

among the leadership team members and how we collectively navigate disruptions with planning the next steps in the initiative.

Continuity

The previous face-to-face meeting with liaisons nearly fell apart at the end with "the turn" in which liaisons nervously questioned their roles within the initiative.

Afterward, liaisons facilitated a task jam, which was a first leadership role for many of them. As a debrief of the task jam professional development, this part of the narrative illustrates the layers of situations that the liaisons are experiencing through their work in the initiative.

Interaction

Positive feedback from the task jam session indicates unforeseen results. More participants show interest in and are applying to Writing Project Invitational Summer Institutes. Liaisons desire additional leadership roles, which leads directors to ask for more leadership opportunities for their sites. With positive feedback to buoy the leadership team members, we offer ideas of what direction the March meeting could take. Unlike previous planning situations, we negotiate more about what the liaisons are ready to take on.

Codes

In this situation, the gerund code *negotiating initiative planning* shows the trouble or potential disruptions within the initiative-planning narrative. The trait code *overwhelm* identifies an element of professional development that we are trying to avoid. The gerund code *describing effective professional development* shows some of the ways we resolve back-talk by focusing objectively on the core principles we want our focus to be.

The concept of work juxtaposes with the trait code *magic* to describe how we plan professional development. The trait code *trust* is a descriptor for how we interact during planning.

“Don’t Overwhelm Them”—Storying the Initiative

On January 24th, task jam professional development sessions facilitated across the country marked the first phase in the Assignments Matter initiative goal of reaching five hundred people to create, peer review, and revise meaningful writing assignments for potentially immediate classroom use. The second phase to reach another five hundred participants would happen throughout the summer months. Feedback from Writing Project site directors indicated that participants left the task jam sessions curious about the next steps, and the leadership team needed to plan what those steps would look like. The task jam also marked a different turn in the initiative from the anxiety experienced the previous November. That Saturday’s successful focus on creating meaningful tasks empowered the liaisons and leadership team members to face fears within their respective roles, and our goal as a leadership team was to maintain this momentum by staying true to *describing effective professional development* consistent with the Writing Project framework.

Sam called upon the leadership team members to identify the best-working pieces of the task jam experience. These pieces would be instrumental for organizing the March meeting, which centered on liaisons’ planning for summer iterations of task jam sessions. Sasha pointed to the public Twitter feed as a resource:

I'm looking at the Twitter feed right now. And there's a lot of excitement from that day about giving feedback and it seems like in just looking at that the ide- the notion of spending time together was really prevalent in the posts that I saw. And then most of the people posted about how awesome it was to get feedback and to

sit down with someone and give, like, real feedback. (leadership team Google Hangout, February 4, 2015)

Working through the writing process of drafting, peer feedback, revision, and publication with other teachers allowed participants to experience the meaningfulness of thinking partners, a familiar concept but the term was particularly recognizable from the prior Literacy Design Collaborative initiative. The writing process, central to the National Writing Project vision, called for teachers to pause in the task creation to respond to each other's work. Participants found "sit[ing] down with someone" and "spending time together" in collaboration to be exciting and perhaps fresh.

Jenny explained to me how the Writing Project shaped her ideas of collaboration and how that might be different in other contexts:

I think [the Writing Project] has shaped how I view collaboration and how I view that idea of, I didn't know the word for it until, you know, our LDC work, but that idea of having a thinking partner and just really kind of like having a team and people that . . . you, like, share ideas with because I have, I know that there are teachers out there who do not share their materials and who do not help each other and who, you know . . . I've been in a building where people were not terribly friendly to each other. (interview, January 6, 2016)

The initiative, built upon the National Writing Project's ideas of not only *describing effective professional development* but implementing its design, set up a friendly, online environment in which thinking partners could respond to each other, which might not be the case in their local contexts as Jenny described of her own experiences with people who were "not terribly friendly to each other." Thinking partners or team members were valuable to "share ideas with." This next phase of the initiative called for the leadership team members to share our ideas so we could begin *negotiating initiative planning*.

Leadership team members agreed that it would be important for liaisons to debrief their January task jam experiences when we met again in March. A leadership team

debrief had helped us understand the highs and lows of the last meeting with the liaisons and would be an important reflection piece for the liaisons as they began revising the tools they used January 24th for their next round of workshops that summer. But Sasha raised another important point that the liaisons also needed new learning. She said:

So maybe the structure of our day is kind of like: What happened? The good, bad, the ugly, whatever. And then, okay, so we want to, we don't want to leave you just with old information. We want to give you something new to run with and kind of think about. (leadership team Google Hangout, February 4, 2015)

We needed to honor the liaisons' experiences, whether they were "good, bad, [or] ugly." Additionally, the new information we provided would need to be something they wanted "to run with and kind of think about." Part of the negotiations involved how much new learning was appropriate in a narrowly-focused initiative such as this. Leaning on our previous experiences as both participants and leaders, we knew we did not want to *overwhelm* the liaisons with too much new learning.

We discussed how sharing our previous LDC experiences might encourage liaisons to work through any struggles they might still be having with the LDC task templates. The liaisons had previously pushed against the structured design, which Sasha remembered well from a particularly frustrating point for her in the previous LDC initiative. She remembered:

I was all kinds of pissed off and like, "What the hell am I doing?" . . . And I almost wonder if it might be advantageous to share some of that, like, "Look. We've kind of grown into this." . . . Sam, you kind of alluded to your struggles with it. And Aileen, you alluded to it too in that Vegas chat. But I almost wonder if it might be helpful to them if we share our struggles. I mean, it has been a process. (leadership team Google Hangout, February 18, 2015)

Sasha's words "it has been a process" took us to the beginning of the Assignments Matter initiative when we discussed the most meaningful aspects of the Literacy Design

Collaborative we could share in this smaller grant extension of that work. The idea that we had “grown into this” referred to the three-year length of the LDC initiative. Sharing our previous experiences might mitigate any of the liaisons’ frustrations by showing how we were connected to what they were experiencing with this initiative. We wanted to continue strengthening our interactions with the liaisons by offering ourselves as partners in the struggle.

In the longer LDC initiative, we had been required to design an instructional ladder after working through the process of writing and revising our tasks. Hank offered this next step as possible new learning for the March meeting with liaisons:

So one of the things I was wondering is, is there something that we're going to get to as part of this work, whether it's in March or not, that gets to, you know, start to scratch at the area after the task itself? (leadership team Google Hangout, February 18, 2015)

“Scratch[ing] at the area after the task itself” indicated the exploration of the instructional ladder leading up to the student’s completion of the writing task. In this scenario, teachers’ next steps would be to think, “What instruction needs to take place in order for my students to successfully complete the task I have just written for them?”

Due to the complexity of delving into the instructional design setting up the writing task, Sasha disagreed with moving the liaisons in that direction. She reminded us of our earlier commitment to task writing:

[We decided] to just do the task portion of that template because we did not want to over-complicate it. And so I'm, I'm really worried, you know, because these guys are trying to get ready for another round in March. I'm really worried and I want to be really cognizant about not over-complicating it for them. (leadership team Google Hangout, February 18, 2015)

This concern for “not over-complicating it for them” might have stemmed from Sasha’s previous experience at being “pissed off and, like, ‘What the hell am I doing?’” during

the Literacy Design Collaborative initiative as well as the memory of the liaisons' anxious "turn" during the November 2014 roll-out meeting. Her personal experience of the previous initiative and our collective experience of the Assignments Matter initiative provided logical arguments for keeping a narrow focus on the task itself. Over-complicating the next steps would *overwhelm* the liaisons.

Hank continued the negotiation of what he thought could be critical new learning for the liaisons. He debated:

So maybe if we just sort of spend a little bit of time with, "Okay here's what the next step looks like" and start to put it together? It may make people feel more comfortable with what they're doing, going to the next, when they go to the next task session. (leadership team Google Hangout, February 18, 2015)

Like Sasha, Hank did not want to overwhelm the liaisons but offered a suggestion for what he thought would "make people feel more comfortable with what they're doing next." Exploring the next steps of instructional design had been Hank's moment of clarity during the previous initiative, which he explained:

And I think when it started to make a lot of sense, you know, I think right after San Francisco then we really sort of dug in and started to put the scaffolds together and the instructional ladder . . . I think that's where we even talked about the little formative assessment, those smaller multi-numbered rubrics we were using at the time. And it starts to click in a little bit more when you look at that next piece of it, sort of where it goes after that. (leadership team Google Hangout, February 18, 2015)

For Hank, the discussion about the instructional ladder made the Literacy Design Collaborative module writing "click in a little bit more." He wanted this clarity for the liaisons as they looked at the next steps for the tasks written at their Writing Project sites. Unfortunately, Hank had only experienced a portion of the November roll-out meeting via web camera and so did not have the same background information as Sasha did of the nervousness that had pervaded the room toward the day's end. In those moments,

liaisons had shown their hesitance at leading their own professional development, but their questions also spoke of how *overwhelmed* they were with the initiative.

Sam entered the discussion to name the options we had placed on the table and her thinking about those options:

So, I'm actually of two minds so I'm going to just say what I think . . . [One is] name three things kids would have to do and then you begin to think about what instruction's important so they can do that. We could also, the, and Sasha's saying, which was sort of our initial idea, and what I had in mind when I started, which is, . . . We used some tools to make some tasks. So how do we know those tasks are good? But does anybody either have an opinion about one track or the other? Or if you have a different idea this would be a good time to jump in. (leadership team Google hangout, February 18, 2015)

The director stepped in at that moment to remind us of the “sort of the initial idea, and what [she] had in mind when [she] started” and helped us see the “costs and benefits” of that option as well as the other one we had discussed. One option, an extension of the original plan, would be to closely examine the tools used to evaluate tasks written at each site. The other option would be to think briefly about the instruction students needed in order to successfully accomplish the task that had been created for them. In the second option we would be facing the risks of over-complicating the initiative’s goals and overwhelming the liaisons. After discussing costs and benefits of each option, Sam held the space open for leadership team members to “jump in” with “an opinion about one track or the other” just as she had done during our initial planning meeting in September at the beginning of the initiative. Sam knew that inviting us into the planning space might shift the initiative away from her original intention, but she asked us to “jump in” anyway.

In *negotiating initiative planning*, we had to consider how to provide the most effective professional development. What we knew about providing professional

development came from both our experiences as planners and as participants. Sasha offered personal experience as a way of *describing effective professional development* for her:

But I know for me when I'm in professional development, if I'm wrapping my head around something that's really complex, I prefer it to be kept kind of simplified and then go deeper into it versus kind of moving onto something. But that's just how I think and I learn, so. I don't know. (leadership team Google hangout, February 18, 2015)

“I don’t know” suggested she might not know how the liaisons would respond to “moving onto something” before going “deeper into” the task writing we had already begun. “I don’t know” might also suggest a concern that liaisons would respond as she had once done when *overwhelmed* with the LDC framework (“What the hell am I doing?”). From our November experience, we knew this was a possibility.

Negotiating the initiative planning required leadership team members to weigh the different options set before us to decide on the most effective, efficient, and productive use of Saturday’s meeting in March. In a later conversation, Sasha shared her perspective of how we accomplished these negotiations:

It always comes back to writing and strong teaching, and so thinking together about writing and strong teaching and what that looks like I think grounds the conversation so it doesn't become personal. Like we might have very different, like I feel like I have very different philosophies than some of the people in our group, but yet we're able to agree on writing's important and, you know, what strong teaching looks like. (interview, January 6, 2016)

Knowing “what strong teaching looks like” and how it transferred to strong professional development, helped us develop a plan grounded in what we knew about effective professional development and not personal philosophies. We decided to blend the two options on the table. We would encourage liaisons to take a light step onto the instructional ladder as well as guide them towards a deeper investigation into what made

an exemplary writing task. We agreed on what “writing and strong teaching” looked like regardless of our “different philosophies,” which helped us negotiate planning in ways that honored the initiative’s design but also honored pushing the design to “do a next step” as requested by the first task jam participants (interview, March 27, 2015).

Hank discussed the importance of working together and emphasized *trust* as a factor in defining these interactions:

The fact that you didn’t just sort of come up with something on your own and you worked it out with other people who you trust. And then you’ve seen it happen, now you have some kind of confidence in it. (interview, March 27, 2015)

Hank described “work[ing] it out with other people who you trust,” and in our virtual room online we worked through different professional development philosophies.

Leadership team members trusting each other, participants trusting their thinking partners, and the leadership team trusting the director were components present in Hank’s description of working together. By seeing big conceptual pictures through to the small details of their implementation we developed a “kind of confidence” in our planning of professional development in the context of this initiative. This trust in each other and in ourselves might predict how much trust the liaisons would have in us during the next phase of the initiative.

We spent the next few online hangouts updating each other on the details of our assigned tasks, occasionally dealing with technical issues, outdated materials, and forgotten duties, all of which complicated the planning. These obstacles showed more clearly that planning an initiative was work and not very *magical*. Often, in less magical moments, preparation details or lack of access slowed the leadership team’s planning momentum. As Sam once said, “I think Google’s great until it’s not” (leadership team

Google Hangout, February 4, 2015), when echoing issues on the video conference call slowed our progress. Working through these issues together showed the strength and respect of our interactions with one another, which allowed the leadership team to move patiently forward with the work.

Back-talk

This situation showed the back-talk of negotiations, which could potentially trouble interactions when leadership team members planned for the next meeting with liaisons. Sessions like those before the March 2015 liaison meeting were negotiations of leadership space, individual teaching and leading philosophies, action steps, and task completion. What seemed like magic at the end was really hard work throughout. Not every meeting would be productive, thought-provoking, and agreeable. Some parts of the initiative planning process, like those prior to the spring meeting, would depend on throwing disparate ideas on the table—cyberspace or chat room since these meetings were online—and agreeing on which plan might be best for the purpose it needed to serve.

The back and forth negotiations of planning the March meeting illustrated two developing concepts occurring in addressing the situation's back-talk. One was setting aside personal philosophies for the good of negotiations and collaboration. Sasha did not agree with the direction the planning was taking, and Hank was eager to take tasks further than the original initiative work outlined. The second was the development of trust that showed leadership team members believed in the intelligence and investment of everyone on the team. Even when we struggled with negotiating the initiative plan at times, we trusted that our persistence would help us work it out.

Nonetheless, our biggest worry would not be resolved until the end of the March 28, 2015 meeting. Would our planning decision to include both an introduction to the instructional ladder and the task jurying tools overwhelm the liaisons or inspire them?

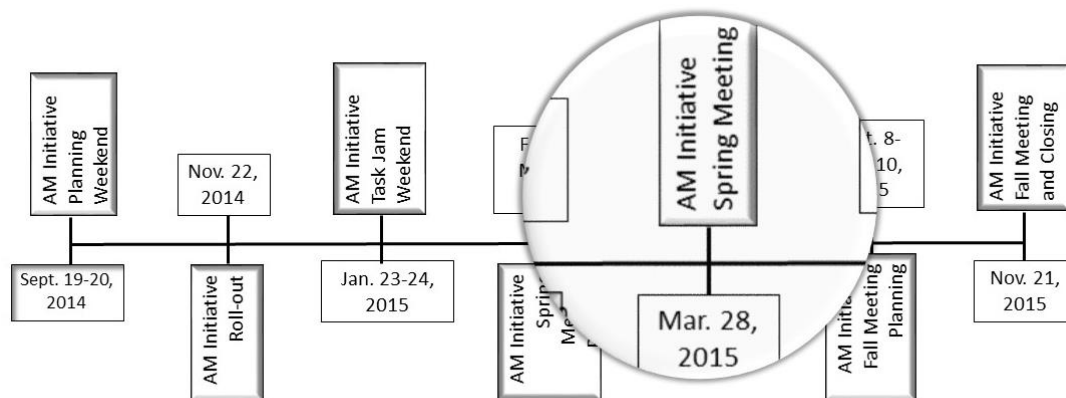


Figure 14. Time-line magnification of “They Trust Us Now” (Situation 5)

“They Trust Us Now” (Situation 5)

Situation

The fifth situation describes the March 28, 2015 meeting with liaisons in Washington, D.C. Having negotiated the planning of this event by evaluating different suggestions, the leadership team lands on a sorting activity, which engages the liaisons in analyzing types of tasks, instructional needs of students, and the jurying requirements for submissions. The student panel we use as another way to determine a task’s quality and meaningfulness is introduced. Half-way through the grant work, this situation shows the initiative’s second phase in which plans for the summer begin.

Continuity

Leadership team members had experienced a previous, scary "turn" with this group and carefully planned the March meeting activities to not be overwhelming.

Liaisons and leadership team members experienced positive feedback from the task jam, which was phase one in the initiative to reach a thousand educators. The March meeting extends the focus of the initiative to introduce new learning and a new lens through which to think about creating meaningful tasks for students.

Interaction

Step-by-step, leadership team members and liaisons walk through deeper discussions about evaluating and revising tasks. Our collaborative efforts continue when we work together to select tasks for the first-time student "shark tank." The shark tank empowers students' voices in task discussion, and liaisons shift their thinking about students' roles in task development.

Codes

In this situation, the gerund code *experiencing collaboration in professional contexts* and the descriptive trait code *feedback* show liaisons and leadership team members looking at tasks together. The gerund code *describing effective professional development* connects to the gerund code *describing teaching context* and the trait code *empower* to point out how leadership team members are thinking about the initiative in their own teaching settings and with students. These codes show that the narrative extends beyond the situations bound by the initiative, indicative of the dimension of continuity. The trait code *trust* illustrates how interactions in this situation differ from the previous November's interactions with the liaisons.

“They Trust Us Now”—Storying the Initiative

After meeting to discuss details on Google Hangout, checking in with the community on Google Plus, and corresponding via emails, the National Writing Project

Assignments Matter leadership team entered the hotel meeting room on March 28, 2015 to guide liaisons through a day of debriefing their January task jam sessions and planning for the next rounds that would take place during the summer. The last time we had joined with the liaisons in a face-to-face encounter, Sam talked them “off the ledge” of fear and doubt about leading their own professional development in an initiative like this one (Sasha personal communication, January 24, 2015). We made conscious decisions to simplify the tools we were using at this phase in the initiative so we would not overwhelm them again. They would be replicating our demonstrations with their summer task jam participants and needed simple steps in order to do that. If Sam needed to rally the troops at the end of this meeting, it would indicate we had not accurately predicted their questions, further weakening our interactions with the liaisons and potentially collapsing this situation or possibly the initiative. We each felt the intense pressure to deliver meaningful content.

After greeting one another and writing into the day, we launched a creative three-round collaborative sorting activity. Liaisons at each table worked together to see writing assignments submitted during their task jam sessions through three different lenses: content, instruction, and evaluation.

During the first sorting activity, Jenny asked the liaisons to work in table groups to creatively sort the submitted task jam writing assignments in any number of categories—content area, type of assignment (informative, argumentative, narrative), or other ways. The purpose of this activity was to get them to think about what the task was really asking students to do. Liaisons sorted tasks and named a wide variety of

categories, getting the liaisons familiar with the tasks they would be working with the remainder of the day.

The second sorting activity followed Hank's suggestion. Hank and I introduced the instructional ladder to provide more context to the writing assignment. Introducing backwards design in such a way honored his idea to "scratch at [this] area" (leadership team Google Hangout, February 18, 2015) and incorporated Sasha's suggestion to not "over-complicate it" (leadership team Google Hangout, February 18, 2015). Liaisons sorted tasks based on criteria such as length of time for completion, amount of information students needed, and level of task difficulty.

Aileen and Sasha led the third sorting activity. Staying true to the original intentions of the initiative, they explained the jurying rubric that would be used to determine tasks' quality. Tasks needed to be evaluated as good-to-go or exemplary using the LDC jurying rubric to be submitted to the Literacy Design Collaborative task bank. By this third sort, liaisons could recognize the thought that needed to go into designing a well-crafted task.

Having dug into these tasks throughout the morning, liaisons had a better understanding of what an effective writing assignment looked like or how to revise one. The following public tweet on Twitter showed we were not over-complicating the day's work but complicating it just enough: "Nerd Alert: I love when my writing project friends complicate my thinking! @Rw @sw #tasksmatter" (Jessa, 10:05 AM, March 28, 2015). Jessa appreciated how the different sorting activities challenged her perceptions of what meaningful tasks looked like. Her "writing project friends" were thinking partners who collaborated with her during this day's learning experience.

This path to new learning excited another liaison who wanted to extend the experience by collaborating with colleagues in her local context: “#tasksmatter I am in awe of our new learning. The tasks make so much more sense now. Can't wait to get home and share with my colleagues” (Tabby, 12:05 PM, March 28, 2015). At the end of three sorting activities, liaisons felt confident in using content areas, types of writing, and length of instruction to narrow the scope of writing assignments and the jurying rubric to help them revise tasks. They were also comfortable to share these tools within their local school contexts. Liaisons like Tabby publicly stated they wanted to “get home and share with [their] colleagues,” an early indication of the day’s success.

Our final spin on task evaluation came at the end of the day with a student “shark tank” during which students on a panel discussed the tasks presented to them and voted for their favorites. The shark tank, drawn in part from the television show and what Sam had seen in another context, was a means of gathering student feedback. One liaison tweeted this statement on Twitter: “These HS students are raising excellent points about the way we write/create assignments! #NWP #tasksmatter” (Alice, 12:24 PM, March 28, 2015). Alice publicly honored the students by saying they were “raising excellent points” about writing assignments. Hank added to the Twitter feed by posting: “Asking real live students for feedback on some Tasks that have been developed at Task Jams. These are some amazing insights! #tasksmatter” (Hank @hank, March 28, 2015). These students’ “amazing insights” gave *feedback* to both liaisons and leadership team members, providing new learning “to run with and kind of think about” (leadership team Google Hangout, February 4, 2015).

The three rounds of sorting earlier that morning did not prepare the liaisons for what students wanted to write about most. Sasha discussed the liaisons' surprise in our debrief meeting later:

One, [the shark tank] was good because it kind of opened up people's eyes. But I also think it was good because it challenged some assumptions that people were making about what kids think about tasks. (leadership team debrief, March 28, 2015)

The shark tank “challenged some assumptions” teachers had about what made tasks effective in the classroom. If students had no interest in the topic, it would not matter how well-worded the assignment was. The students gave feedback that helped liaisons see these tasks through a fourth lens, the writers. The hashtag “#tasksmatter” took on more meaning when we pondered “tasks matter to whom?”

Adding a student panel to provide feedback to teachers on these task jam creations during the March meeting was a calculated risk. Hank posed the question that many liaisons in the room may have been thinking: “I wonder what it would have been like if there was a kid that wasn't, like, they were clearly three awesome kids. What if we had Johnny Doesn't Do A Lot come too?” (leadership team debrief, March 28, 2015). If these local students, selected by a teacher contact in the city, had been unmotivated or uninspired by the event, the shark tank would have failed. But we, who had experienced empowerment during our time as leadership team members, extended an opportunity for empowerment to students. When we gave students voice in task evaluation, it was as Sasha explained:

I think that's one of the powers of doing something like the shark tank are saying, "What do you see in this and how would you attack it?" I think it puts the power back in [students'] hands to say, "I can do this." To empower them to be able to have that voice. (leadership team debrief, March 28, 2015)

We and the liaisons had inaccurately predicted the tasks students would like, and the students' feedback made a profound impact on our perceptions of tasks.

Hank predicted, "I think that's going to be a really replicated part of today" (leadership team debrief, March 28, 2015), and by the end of the initiative it became clear just how much thinking this student shark tank inspired. In a later situation, I will explore more deeply how this activity influenced liaisons to view assignments and students through different lenses.

During our debrief of the event, we acknowledged that one characteristic in *describing effective professional development* is its transferability to our individual teaching contexts. The March meeting's professional development experience was one situation in which teachers could consider the roles students' voices had in the classroom. Aileen, in *describing her teaching context*, said her own diverse classroom in a low-performing turnaround school was a place where students could find a voice:

We hear all the time through the PEBC that our model classrooms are these classrooms in these white suburban areas. And then [the evaluator] came in and saw [my students] and she's like, "You couldn't get them to stop talking [in Socratic seminar]." And I'm like, "I know." (leadership team debrief, March 28, 2015)

The shark tank reminded the liaisons and leadership team members of the purpose behind writing meaningful tasks. These tasks had real audiences with voices that would not "stop talking" when empowered with opportunity like Aileen's students during Socratic seminar. During the March meeting, we showed liaisons how to *empower* students in the same way many of us sought *empowerment* in our roles as teacher-leaders within our communities, schools, and initiatives.

We saw different interactions at play than the ones during the November 2014 meeting when the LDC template tasks were first introduced. After Sasha read the transcript from our November 2014 debrief meeting, she noted the liaisons' fear and pointed out to me the ledge we had led them to that day. But this time, Sasha remarked, "There was no turn today" (leadership team debrief, March 28, 2014), commenting that the momentum stayed productive and forward-thinking. She shared her reasons for the meeting's positive, collaborative atmosphere during our leadership team debrief that afternoon: "Yeah, I think people trust us now and so they're willing to say, 'Yeah, that wasn't my experience.' Right? So because they trust us. So like, 'Oh this works. Okay, I can trust them now'" (leadership team debrief, March 28, 2015). When the liaisons saw "no disaster [had] happened" during their task jam sessions it was as Sam had described of her own leadership experiences and they could say, "Oh this works" (interview, March 27, 2015).

In an earlier situation, Sam described how our leadership team's continuity of experiences built leadership capacity in us. These same words rang true for the liaisons as well:

You know it's scary, but you keep having these experiences where you walk up to that scariness, and then you do it, and then you're on the other side of it, and you realize you can do things you didn't know you could do. (interview, March 27, 2015)

The liaisons' weakened interactions with us and with each other in November may have been because "for several liaisons this has been their first leadership opportunity at their site" (Sam interview, August 20, 2015). But they had come out "on the other side" of a successful task jam professional development session and participated in a meeting with new learning to find themselves growing as teacher leaders.

Sasha identified *trust* as integral to the leadership team-liaison interaction—“They trust us.” The liaisons trusted the leadership team enough to share their experiences, even those that may not have played out as they had planned—“the good, bad, the ugly” (leadership team Google Hangout, February 4, 2015). *Trust* strengthened the dimension of interaction in the initiative narrative, moving forward the inquiry, reflection, and revision necessary for planning summer iterations of the Assignments Matter task jam sessions during their second phase. The liaisons gained new learning and new perspectives through the tools and activities that the leadership team planned for the March meeting— “something new to run with and kind of think about” (Sasha, leadership team Google Hangout, February 4, 2015)—and were ready to take them into both their local Writing Project and school contexts.

Sasha described the impact of working with the members of the leadership team:

You guys are amazing thinking partners and the idea that I can come with stupid questions or not so stupid questions, for me is really powerful because I don't have that where I am in the same way. A safe space for me to be able to say, "Hey." (leadership team debrief, March 28, 2015)

For Sasha, the dimension of interaction depended on a “safe space” where questions could be openly asked in a nonjudgmental environment. For some of us, the environment in our local contexts might not have had the same safety, as Sasha alluded when she said “where I am in the same way” and “[my district] dropped me” in her reference to access to the LDC jurying tools. We leadership team members invested ourselves in the initiative and through the course of the Assignments Matter initiative together grew more deeply in our trust of one another. But this trust had been forged quickly during the previous initiative, and Sasha alluded to how this was able to happen:

I would also argue that the protocols that [NWP directors] put into place to develop trust quickly work. So like all that stuff that Sam and Elyse had us do in LDC, Sam's "Stick it to the man," you know, all of that helped us trust them, which in turn created a space for us to be trustful. (interview January 6, 2016)

At that time, we were sitting in the liaisons' seats listening to the encouraging words of other leadership team members. The informally named "Stick it to the man" of that earlier initiative was the same as the rally cry "In Your Face" speech Sam used in Assignments Matter at our first meeting with liaisons in November 2014. If we had anything to prove, leadership team members and liaisons had to prove it together. We understood during our experiences as participants in the earlier LDC initiative that the leadership team members supported our hard efforts. Our NWP leaders wrote letters to administrators as proof of that support. We came to trust them. When the Assignments Matter liaisons understood we, as leadership team members, intended to support them and work alongside them in this grant initiative in the same way, they trusted us.

Back-talk

We took risks when we introduced the instructional design and jurying rubric to complicate liaisons' thinking and when we challenged liaisons' assumptions through a student shark tank. Back-talk was our fear of overwhelming the liaisons. The liaisons took our fear away and gave us trust in return. This situation showed how different elements of trust strengthened interactions. A large entity like the National Writing Project trusted teacher-leaders within its network. NWP and its Assignments Matter leadership team trusted and would continue to trust liaisons to implement initiative's professional development at their local sites. Teachers trusting each other was essential for the initiative's success. People would continue to be thinking partners face-to-face

and virtually and develop complex interrelationships of questioning and working things out together in spaces on Google Plus and Google Hangouts on Air.

We began the initiative with a narrow focus on assignments, a focus some of the liaisons questioned during the November 2014 roll-out, but this situation introduced the student shark tank as another element of trust—teachers trusting the work of the initiative. The liaisons began connecting students’ faces with the tasks their participants were writing. Importantly, through the lens of the student shark tank, liaisons came to realize that their work had more meaning than just as products for the Literacy Design Collaborative.

We would learn more about how the student shark tanks played out in liaisons’ schools and districts later in the initiative, which means their story is not yet over, but grant deliverables were the next, more immediate focus. Would the deliverables required by the grant funder cause more disruptions in the narrative?

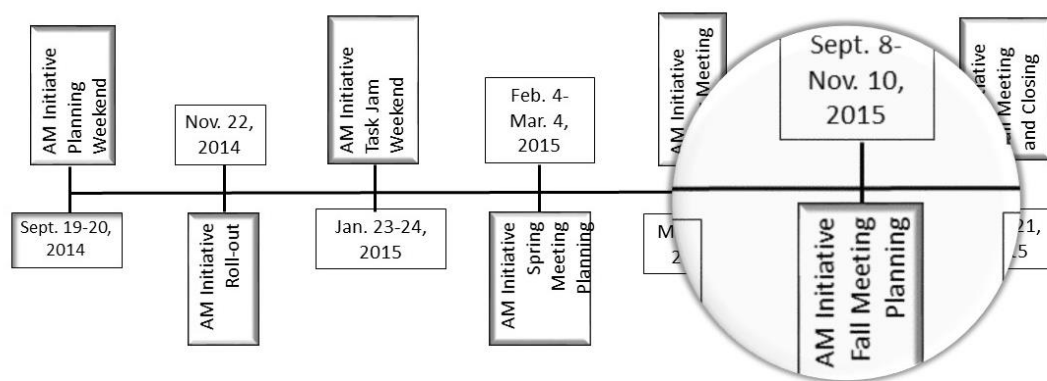


Figure 15. Time-line magnification of “The Deliverables” (Situation 6)

“The Deliverables” (Situation 6)

Situation

The sixth situation describes the Assignments Matter initiative grant deliverables. The year of planning professional development had been devoted to teaching liaisons, and through them hundreds of educators, to write meaningful tasks and to evaluate those tasks in a number of ways—content appropriateness, length of instruction, jurying rubric, student voice. To show the products of this work, the leadership team members return to the grant proposal to review what needs to be accomplished by the initiative’s end in November 2015.

The narrative carries forward, now to address tensions that deliverables can sometimes cause in grant-funded initiatives. Leadership team members plan the process of gathering products required by the grant funder.

Continuity

Experienced in guiding reflections and asking questions, leadership team members compose interview questions. Individual leadership team members address the needed deliverable components depending on comfort levels and experience in the area. Aileen develops the jurying training; Martin gathers materials for writing into the day; Martin and I sign on for interview liaisons; Sasha develops the reflection writing activities.

Interaction

Leadership team members collaboratively decide how to proceed in developing interview questions and planning the components of the November 2015 meeting. Liaisons join leadership team members in collaboratively evaluating the work products

and what would be submitted to the grant funders. Closing the grant initiative would mean the end of our work together, which leads to reflections about the quality of the time we spent together.

Codes

In this situation, I discover an area for possible future research regarding the effects of grant deliverables on a national organization. In 2011, when the National Writing Project began to depend more on grant funding, Writing Project sites had situated themselves within the common vision and mission of teachers teaching teachers. The gerund code *asking what is NWP?* points out the tensions that grant deliverables cause some Writing Project sites. The gerund codes *describing the initiative* and *negotiating initiative planning* narrate the technical pieces of our work, and the trait codes *struggle* and *accept* juxtapose the requirements of the Assignments Matter grant and the values embedded in the National Writing Project. The gerund code *learning leadership capacity* identifies our roles as professional development planners and how we stretch beyond those roles to design interview questions.

“The Deliverables”—Storying the Initiative

Fall 2015 approached and Assignments Matter professional development sessions continued as liaisons pushed to meet their goals of fifty participants who would create, peer review, and revise meaningful writing assignments for their students in what we called “task jams.” There was a moment at the September 2014 Assignments Matter first planning session when leadership team members looked at each other questioningly (“a thousand participants?”). Yet the network of twenty-one liaisons made the math much simpler, and they worked through the summer months up until the November 2015

meeting to obtain their numbers. Through creative scheduling, some liaisons facilitated task jam sessions at their schools for professional learning communities on development days or after school.

By *describing the initiative*, Sam explained that “because the work we're doing is grant-funded . . . we have some deliverables . . . [including] some interviews with participants,” as well as the goal of “organiz[ing] the day in November to make that a powerful learning experience” (interview, August 20, 2015). Because we would conduct focus group sessions via Google Hangout on Air before the November meeting, our first priority was to craft sets of interview questions appropriate for the teacher-participants who attended task jam sessions in addition to questions we would ask the liaisons themselves.

The leadership team members, in *negotiating initiative planning*, developed questions that would zoom in on the salient features of the initiative. I told Sam that it would “be interesting to come up with some really thoughtful, thought-provoking questions for the facilitators and the liaisons, how their year-long experience has been” (interview, August 20, 2015). Sam tempered this by saying we would hear the extremes in experiences:

Yes . . . Now, I mean, we'll hear all kinds of things, I'm sure. But mostly people who are really frustrated or really happy. These are the only two. Because the range of people's experience will be great. But I think the people have a lot of, a lot more learning and growth and excitement came out of this than maybe I even expected, at least from where we stand so far. (interview, August 20, 2015)

When liaisons were *describing the initiative*, we hoped the interviews would capture the “learning and growth and excitement” that we knew liaisons had experienced through their work in the initiative. It was possible, though, that interviews might stir the

memories of “people who [were] really frustrated” with the initiative just as some liaisons had been at its roll-out in November of the previous year.

While we worked through the process of writing meaningful, initiative-responsive interview questions, Sasha’s words after our November 2014 roll-out meeting haunted me:

'Cause I know at our table there was a lot of discussion around "well this feels really prepackaged" and so, you know, like "what is up with this?" kind of thing . . . The template tasks. (leadership team meeting debrief, November 22, 2014)

But it had been nearly a year since the liaisons were first introduced to the “prepackaged” feeling of the template tasks. A year had passed since that November when the liaisons anxiously pushed back against their roles of leading professional development that used those template tasks to create meaningful writing assignments.

Because grant funding was the primary consideration in *negotiating initiative planning*, we had to negotiate the design of our questions, not necessarily with each other as leadership team members like in earlier planning sessions, but in regard to the demands of the grant initiative. Our experiences as reflective practitioners and leaders helped us develop questions, but our new experiences *learning leadership capacity* in grant-driven work helped us frame questions that would highlight the initiative’s effectiveness. Sam worried, though, that my participant-observer researcher lens might affect the interviews’ length and directionality. She said:

I can see your researcher brain at work, Amy, that's why I'm saying we don't have to write up the whole story. Yeah, we don't have to hit every one of those questions. We have to get the Common Core questions. (leadership team Google Hangout, October 26, 2015)

As Sam reminded us, “We have to get the Common Core questions” because the LDC structure with Common Core State Standards as its foundation required us to ask liaisons

about their work with the standards in their professional development sessions and in their local teaching contexts. These questions were important for the grant funder even if time did not allow for us to “hit every one” of the other questions about experiences unique to leading National Writing Project professional development.

These negotiations between our views of NWP values (*asking what is NWP?*) and the Assignments Matter grant structure reminded me of early discussions about our previous LDC work. After our March meeting with the liaisons, Jenny told us how she had *struggled* with *accepting* the LDC structure:

I think [Sasha] and I both said that it took us a long time to come to, to feel, you know, to look at LDC and to, to kind of accept, to reconcile it and make it NWP, to look at how we could make LDC NWP-ish, you know, to weave it. Because I was not real happy with it at first either. So, I can understand even how non- or how NWP people are, Writing Project people that you're working with would have some problems with the boxes and the fill in the blanks. (leadership team debrief, March 28, 2015)

Here, in the Assignments Matter situation so similar to this past one in our continuity of experiences, we were being asked to “kind of accept” the LDC “boxes and the fill in the blanks,” only this time we had to be conscious of how our questions adequately addressed the goals of the Assignments Matter initiative grant work.

In this *acceptance*, there was also negotiation happening among Writing Project liaisons because the National Writing Project was using grant funding to learn something new. According to Sam, grant funders typically ask, “How do you know what you know? How do you know that you learned something here? How can you show us what you did?” (interview, August 20, 2015). At the roll-out meeting with liaisons the previous year, these grant questions prompted one liaison to ask her own, “What is the hierarchy [between the National Writing Project and the Literacy Design

Collaborative]?” (liaison 1, question-answer session, November 22, 2014). Sam described the tension or *struggles* in the previous LDC initiative, which was the parent to this one:

And everybody had to have a deliverable. Everybody had to have a module, because otherwise we couldn't put our work on the table and say, "What was that like? How did we learn?" So I'm okay with the tension around deliverables, but I try to, you know, I try to have a kind of Vygotskian approach like it can be scary but not, you know, in your zone of proximal development, not your zone of frustrational development. But that's a fine line. (interview, August 20, 2015)

The “tension around deliverables” pushed us and the liaisons to consider the NWP values we were embedding in our grant work. We had already danced upon the “fine line” between the liaisons’ zone of “proximal development” and “frustrational development,” or *struggles*, early in this initiative when we asked liaisons to lead professional development using a structured template task (and to reach a thousand educators). With the end of the initiative approaching, we now needed to ask liaisons, “What was that like?” and hope for a positive response.

In addition to crafting questions and interviewing participants and liaisons, we needed to consider how to effectively and efficiently jury the tasks submitted during the past year. In *negotiating initiative planning*, we outlined a plan for using the LDC jurying rubric with the entire 327 tasks before submitting selected good-to-go and exemplary tasks as products of our grant work. Drawing on Aileen’s extensive experience with jurying, we knew we wanted to simplify the jurying process. This focused effort resulted in slightly different negotiations than March meeting’s planning. Through *learning leadership capacity* and the resulting skills in identifying a strategic plan, our leadership team members came to quicker consensus on what November’s meeting needed to look like. Sam summarized what we had decided and after hearing the

simple steps, Aileen and Sasha expressed their relief. Aileen compared what we had planned for the liaisons with her extensive jurying experiences:

I think it's clear and then also just simple enough that it's not completely overwhelming for jurying because I, I don't know, in my experience jurying can be a little bit of a daunting task. (leadership team Google Hangout, October 26, 2015)

Similarly, Sasha agreed with Sam's description of the jurying activity by saying, "Yeah, I like it because it's, it gives a good toe-dipping process into the jurying without overwhelming people" (leadership team Google Hangout, October 26, 2015). Though the jurying process could be "a daunting task," the steps we had decided upon would not be "completely overwhelming" for the liaisons. We had learned the previous November how important it was to not overwhelm the liaisons in the March meeting, and it continued to be at the forefront of our planning at the initiative's upcoming close in November.

With the end of the initiative closing in, we became more aware of how our work within the initiative represented the larger negotiation of *struggles* taking place among various National Writing Project affiliated sites. Sam cited what people thought was the dichotomous relationship between needing grant money and maintaining NWP values:

There are people who say, you know, we shouldn't focus on deliverables; we shouldn't focus on the pushing of new knowledge. We should be focusing on the development of the community and people, like, growing sense of efficacy and expertise within the community, but it should be gentler, you know, and it should be with more of a focus on the person and their place in the community and the, you know, and then they learn in that safe, comfortable place. (interview, August 20, 2015)

We focused on the "pushing of new knowledge" when we incorporated a live-stream recorded component to professional development. We also focused on "the development of the community" through our leadership team meetings and face-to-face meetings with

liaisons. We further developed the community through the Google Plus site forum for Assignments Matter participants. But the grant money dictated what some people saw as a less gentle approach that made them uncomfortable. Sam commented on this tension:

And I tend to be more, you know, I'm kind of more on the edge of that and say, "It's okay if people are a little uncomfortable. It's okay if this is hard. It's okay if we fail sometimes" because that's how we know we're kind of in our zone of proximal development. That's how we know we're pushing up against the edge of something. (interview, August 20, 2015)

Through the work of Assignments Matter and *describing the initiative*, the leadership team members and liaisons pushed up “against the edge of something” when we planned Google Hangouts on Air to check in with sites across the country on a cold January day. We had seen the liaisons and ourselves push up against our zones of proximal development during the different phases in the initiative.

Deliverables were more than structured products outlined in grant proposals. They outwardly showed the tense undercurrent of why the National Writing Project pursued grant money—to fund the work of the national organization and to help local Writing Project sites across the country. But Martin commented on the NWP approach to this initiative and other grant proposals:

We really did believe that assignments matter . . . and that you can make them better. And that you could use these tools that came up as ways to think about that . . . you're leading towards something that kind of has some value and that, in itself, makes the work a little bit easier and little bit more thought-provoking because, you know, you believe in it. I think that made a difference . . . most of the things that I've, you know, done with the Writing Project have come with that. Yes, this is good. They didn't just accept it because there was money. They accepted because there was value. (leadership team debrief, November 21, 2015)

In this initiative and in most of Martin's experiences with the National Writing Project, he could see value in the work he did. Like Assignments Matter, the grants that the

National Writing Project pursued and the money it *accepted* mattered to the vision and mission of the organization.

In our leadership team's experience of *asking what is NWP?* I considered that future research might be needed to understand the relationship between deliverables and their effects on NWP values or how NWP values influence the grants the organization applies for and the deliverables gathered in grant work.

Back-talk

This situation showed grant deliverables as back-talk. On the surface, grant guidelines seemed inconsistent with the organization's values, as did accepting money that might negatively influence the National Writing Project mission. This situation suggested that a disruption occurred in people's assumptions when the National Writing Project situated itself in grant work that was very structured and demanding. Sam argued that grant deliverables pushed us to think more deeply about the work we were being asked to do. We needed to provide proof of the new learning that we said would happen.

Martin voiced an underlying tension when he commented on the money that grants provided. Writing grant proposals, for him, meant pursuing meaningful work. But some Writing Project sites, directors, or teacher consultants might think differently about the impact grant money has on the vision and mission of National Writing Project work.

The initiative would soon be coming to an end with a final face-to-face meeting with liaisons. Some liaisons would be volunteering for interviews. All of us would work the last day to jury tasks for submission to the grant funder. With so much work left to do, we wondered how the liaisons would reflect on this busy day and busy year. When

we asked for their final reflections and feedback, would we discover more about the liaisons' leadership capacity or their struggles?

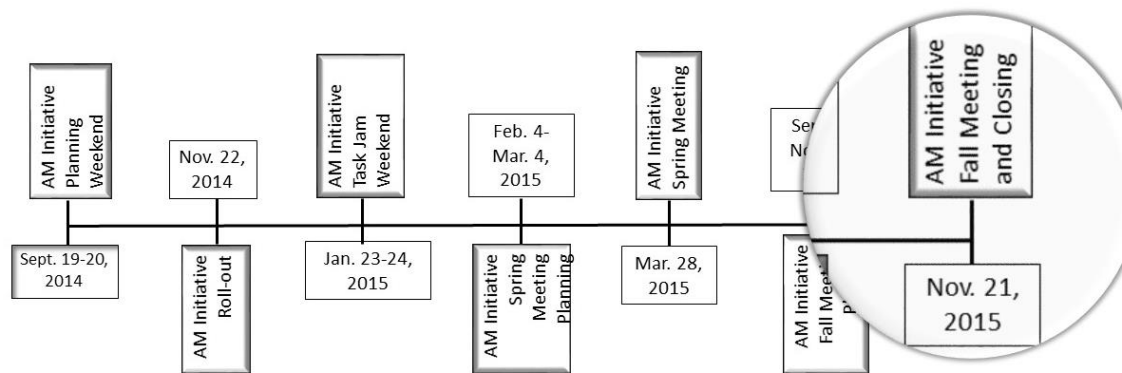


Figure 16. Time-line magnification of “Into the End with Buds, Thorns, and Roses” (Situation 7)

“Into the End with Buds, Thorns, and Roses” (Situation 7)

Situation

The seventh situation describes the work of November 21, 2015, the last day of the initiative. Martin leads liaisons through a community building writing activity that sets the positive, productive tone for the day ahead. Aileen trains liaisons to jury the 327 tasks that resulted from the year’s task jam sessions so we can select good-to-go and exemplary tasks for submission to the grant funder.

The resolution of this narrative illustrates the close of the initiative. To highlight the surprises, challenges, and take-aways of the work, this situation includes vignettes titled “Buds,” “Thorns,” and “Roses.”

Continuity

Although liaisons had varying levels of positive and negative experiences with the online platform—some think the choice in platforms illogical; others enjoy having a

place to hang their thinking—the ability to network with teachers across the country show them possibilities they had not thought of before. Liaisons share new ways they were implementing task jam professional development elements in their schools and districts, but are especially eager to share their adaptations of the student shark tank that we introduced in March.

Having been introduced to the jurying rubric as a revision and evaluation tool during the March meeting, liaisons prepare to use a modified version of the rubric to jury the submitted tasks.

Interaction

After writing and sharing together, liaisons and leadership team members work together in small groups and partners to jury tasks created by task jam participants. We excitedly discuss the potential of some “first draft” tasks, and liaisons text or email the participants to share our feedback.

During a private debrief after the closing and the liaisons depart, the leadership team members are tired, but it is a happy tired, comfortable with each other and the work we accomplished together. They see my role shift a little from participant-observer to researcher, but they smile as I turn on the recorder. I ask a few of the questions we had designed for the liaison interviews so we can share our own experiences from the initiative.

Codes

In this situation, the gerund code *learning leadership capacity* and *experiencing collaboration in professional context* and the trait code *feedback* frame our final day’s work together. The trait code *struggle* describes the liaisons’ challenges during the

initiative. The gerund code *thinking through personal contexts* juxtaposes with the trait code *trust* to reveal some inconsistencies between the two. The trait code *magic* shows how leadership team members compare the initiative context to a school collaboration environment. The trait codes *power*, *empower*, and *embrace* highlight the effects of the student shark tank and the work that must continue.

“Into the End with Buds, Thorns, and Roses”—Storying the Initiative

On Friday, the day before the initiative ended, Martin and I interviewed individual liaisons and video captured their perspectives on this year-long grant work. With the help of Jenny and Sasha, we asked the team’s questions and heard the many positive responses we had hoped for. So when the leadership team members walked through the door leading to the hotel meeting space the next day, we knew we would be entering an atmosphere filled with positive energy. We needed this energy because most of the day would be spent gathering grant deliverables.

Martin’s writing into the day invitation encouraged liaisons and leadership team members to connect our Assignments Matter experiences to vintage postcard pictures. Liaisons and leadership team members laughed as we randomly turned over the cards and



Figure 17. Postcard writing activity picture
"Dream"

tried to see how our experiences might have been like a six-foot shoe, old ladies styling each other’s hair, or bridge diving. Or how might Assignments Matter be connected to a classic car approaching the intersection of “dream”?

I connected my Assignments Matter experience to a picture of well-dressed ladies in rapt attention at a Tupperware party: “The leadership team presented the template tasks as containers for thinking and learning. Eager listeners took the containers home to fill them with their individual work” (journal entry, November 21, 2015). Laughing at the pictures, writing our responses, and sharing our similar feelings about leadership and learning bonded us through a continuity of our experiences in *learning leadership capacity*.

At tables, liaisons and leadership team members formed partners and small groups to follow the guidelines Aileen taught us in her demonstration on task jurying. We busied the rest of our day jurying 327 tasks. In a planning meeting earlier in the month, the leadership team had debated whether we should preview the submissions for incomplete tasks or ones that obviously fell outside the parameters of the LDC jurying rubric. Due to lack of time and other factors leading up to this closing, we decided to use the entire bank of submissions, which was to our fortune because leadership team members and liaisons were able to have conversations about task and content-area literacy potential.

Throughout the day, when some liaisons recognized submissions from their workshops, they texted or emailed participants about their exemplary tasks or the rich conversations and revisions their tasks had inspired. The communication that the liaisons maintained with task jam participants allowed those participant educators to continue *experiencing collaboration in professional contexts* beyond the one-day workshop. The creativity amazed us, but we were even more excited by the variety of content areas we saw. Liaisons felt sure that some of the participants would use our feedback and

discussion to revise their tasks for use in their classrooms, and, in one case, a school counselor's small group sessions on character education. Our collaborative efforts filled a basket with 32 exemplary tasks and 54 good-to-go tasks.

The bulk of our work that day and throughout the initiative focused on tangible products. Our closing of this work, though, needed to focus on the people who made those products possible. Sasha led us in a final reflection about Assignments Matter. In many ways, these surprises, challenges, and take-aways helped me organize my thinking about the initiative into vignettes named after Sasha's reflection activity: Buds, Thorns, and Roses. Each vignette begins with an anonymous reflection submitted by liaisons at the end of our final meeting on November 21, 2015.

Vignette 1: "Buds"

I appreciate the opportunity to learn together with educators from all over. It is helpful to know what the universal struggles in education are and what others have done to work through them.

We were surprised by the commonalities among our *struggles* in education. The initiative built a community of teachers and maintained a network of communication that allowed us to see step outside and above our own classrooms. Mike, one of the liaisons, discussed what it meant to zoom out:

I think that, for me, seeing things from [a national] vantage point is very interesting, right? Especially talking to people from across the country and realizing some of the, some of the concerns are the same, you know, and some of the things we do the best are the same, and, you know, kind of addressing that. I imagine, I imagine like any profession, when you are dealing with something and you're dealing with it every day and you zoom out and you see what it's like at the level above you, it has to have some kind of impact on what you do every day. (liaison interview, November 20, 2015)

Mike, through his work in a national initiative, “zoom[ed] out” to see the bigger picture of struggles on all educational levels across the country. He related his experience to the connectedness and *experiencing collaboration in professional contexts* that all professionals needed to have. He recognized that together we were “kind of addressing” our concerns but also acknowledging what we do best.

For Sasha, this initiative meant more than addressing each other’s concerns. She said:

Listening to everyone talk about the schools that people talked about in the way that we’ve talked about them and that they’ve struggled with the things like we’ve struggled with. There’s power in that, right? There’s something there that, like I can trust, like I have so much faith now that the things that I’m struggling with other people are struggling with. So if you put the smartest people in the room, in the same room, they’re going to figure it out. (interview, March 29, 2015)

These *struggles*, for Sasha, became shared power. From other schools and other states, smart educators named their common struggles and came to “the same room” to “figure it out” together. Sasha often referred to “figuring it out” as *magic*, but here she labeled it as the *trust* or faith she had in the other people in the room. In some of her previous conversations Sasha had called the leadership team members “amazing thinking partners” who offered her “a safe space” to ask “stupid questions or not so stupid questions” (leadership team debrief, March 28, 2015). She was experiencing collaboration in professional contexts in a way that may have seemed *magical* because it did not exist in quite the same way in her own teaching context.

Martin reflected on his “bud” experience, which pushed me to think deeper about the way *trust* or faith in each other was developed. He said:

I was a little surprised . . . about how brave teachers were to throw their assignments out there. And maybe they didn’t feel brave. Maybe we made it, or ‘we’ meaning all [the liaisons] . . . made it so comfortable that it just seemed like,

you know, I'm going to get something good, but there's a, you know, certain exposing of yourself to the critical eye of others. And people are just so generous if, I guess, approached well. (leadership team debrief, November 21, 2015)

Providing *feedback* required all of us, including participants, to expose our work and sometimes our teaching philosophies to “the critical eye of others.” Liaisons, the people to whom we had just said goodbye, “made it so comfortable” for participants to share that perhaps they did not need bravery, just faith and trust in each other. As Mike said in his interview, “The things we do best are the same,” and we had found we did things best when we made ourselves vulnerable and made other people feel comfortable in their vulnerability.

Jenny said that the space we created for networking collaborative connections further extended the learning we shared with each other. She remembered a moment from our first meeting in September 2014:

When we think back to the “What's worth sharing?” I remember thinking the thinking partners was worth sharing and, and I think the connections that they formed with each other and with us, then the importance of that G+ community, . . . to be able to get on there and see who was doing what and who has ideas about things . . . it was like an extension, a web of thinking partners. And so I think that was a really important thing that we shared and created for and with them. (leadership team debrief meeting, November 21, 2015)

We found a way to implement as Jenny described, a “web of thinking partners” in the initiative through online spaces, namely the Google Plus community. Through online collaborative spaces, we could still be in the same room together. This extension of thinking partners beyond our face-to-face meetings built trust within the community. Leadership team members, liaisons, and task jam participants could access this network to “see who was doing what and who has ideas about things” as well as reach out to those educators in a thinking partner capacity.

Vignette 2: “Thorns”

You made this as simple and painless as possible. Thank you and well done.

I really appreciate you all, especially for everything you did to support us in this adventure.

The liaisons recalled how adventurous this year had been for some of them. Weather predicaments, attendance issues, and time constraints were only a few of the *struggles* that the liaisons faced in their new roles as professional development planners and leaders. One liaison, Mike, described how his state dismissed the Common Core State Standards, the standards embedded in the Literacy Design Collaborative task templates. He explained his scenario:

I like the concept of tying it into the Common Core, but [my state] bailed out on the Common Core. . . when I came in, we were a Common Core state. As I was delivering this information, our state bailed out on the Common Core . . . so that was a big wrinkle for me that it wasn't as attractive because we had dropped Common Core. And that was essential to everybody else doing well with this, right? (liaison interview, November 20, 2015)

LDC template tasks' alignment with the Common Core State Standards led Mike to believe that being in a Common Core state “was essential to everybody else doing well with [the initiative].” In a state that “bailed out on the Common Core” it was difficult to attract educators who saw the task templates as no longer needed standards-based tools. This struggle placed liaisons in the position of determining the value of what they were doing. Mike and other liaisons needed to figure out if they could trust the meaningfulness of the task templates themselves or if they only had meaning as extensions of Common Core work.

Having extensive LDC jurying training and extensive experience training educators, Aileen saw our initiative work as moving beyond the Common Core and even

beyond the grant funder. She addressed the point Mike and others raised about recruiting teachers for this workshop:

This work with Assignments Matter is preparing [students] to think critically and to improve their literacy skills, improve their reading skills, their thinking skills, their writing skills. And so whether or not we have Common Core State Standards in place, it's helping students become better and more skilled and confident and so, while I can understand that that might be a challenge that some people are facing in terms of the politics taking place in their district or whatever, I think it would be difficult to challenge this work on the level of, like, how is it not good for kids? (leadership team debrief, November 21, 2015)

Throughout the initiative work, Aileen continuously kept the leadership team grounded by returning us to the true audience for our work, the students— “how is it not good for kids?” The primary focus of the initiative called Assignments Matter was to craft better, stronger, more meaningful writing tasks for the students sitting in our classrooms. Sam pointed out at our first meeting with the liaisons that creating these tasks through a community experience led to “smarter . . . more informed” assignments to engage students (question answer session, November 22, 2014). Students were our primary concern.

Even with all the challenges, one liaison said we “made this as simple and painless as possible.” Sam reminded us, though, that it’s never simple to do complex work. She said:

There's no moment where everything gets solved or fixed. We embrace complex work and we move forward and get better everyday. Everyday we get better. We're like, “Okay, well that was better.” It wasn't perfect. It's never perfect. It's never not messy. And it's never going to be, probably. (leadership team debrief, November 21, 2015)

If in the end we can say, “Okay, well that was better,” then we were *learning leadership capacity* by *embracing* the work that needed to be done.

Vignette 3: “Roses”

It was a pleasure to work together and I hope we have many more opportunities.

I appreciate your investment in us and our students and our work. Thank you.

I am so ready to jump in with the NWP again.

This experience was life-changing for us being around peer groups.

The written reflections gave witness to the positivity the liaisons brought into the closing meeting and were leaving with at the end of the day. Sam told me that she saw the task jam sessions affecting people in different ways. It was true that a few liaisons, stressed by planning and implementing task jam sessions to reach fifty people, decided not to pursue future leadership roles. For most liaisons, however, this “stepping stone” offered them an opportunity for *learning leadership capacity*. In doing so, liaisons connected with new schools, arranged professional development contracts, and looked for more leadership opportunities at their local Writing Project sites. Sam shared what she had heard personally from some liaisons:

And then there are a whole bunch of people who I know some of them are directly asking me, "This changed my life and are there national experiences that I can continue to be involved in?" Like meeting all these people around the country, seeing how different people talk or think about their work, being connected to this brilliant, positive community. Like, “I want to stay in, so what can I do?”
(interview, August 20, 2015)

Being a part of this “brilliant, positive community” and *experiencing collaboration in professional contexts* had become a “life-changing” experience for several liaisons and they “hoped to have many more opportunities” to “jump in with the NWP again.”

Collaboration with colleagues gave educators the time and space to get *feedback* on writing tasks before assigning them to students. The unexpected rose in the initiative was the way in which student feedback during the March shark tank became a new lens

through which the liaisons viewed the Assignments Matter work. We learned more about their experiences during the National Writing Project Annual Meeting and the liaison interviews.

The November 2015 National Writing Project Annual Meeting hosted a shark tank session featuring a new panel of students a few days prior to the leadership team meeting with liaisons to close the initiative. Sam had contacted a friend whose husband taught science in the local area. Through amazing collaborative efforts, a team of three “sharks” joined us in the hotel meeting space. Though they might have had extra credit incentives to be with us on a Thursday afternoon, these high school students seemed eager to evaluate teachers’ tasks. The shark tank evaluated science tasks generated during the Assignments Matter initiative, and liaisons who joined us during the session shared their shark tank adventures from their own teaching contexts and what they learned from those experiences.

During the shark tank session, we used the closed back channel Todaysmeet to anonymously capture participants’ thoughts. One participant posted: “Prediction: light sabers” (4:23pm, Thurs, November 19, 2015), which indicated a task asking students to evaluate the possibility of light sabers actually existing. When students instead chose an editorial task about a real environmental issue, participants responded with, “Real world audience wins the day” (4:23pm, Thurs, Nov 19, 2015) and “Writing for a purpose!” (4:23pm, Thurs, Nov 19, 2015). The participant who inaccurately predicted the outcome added, “Writing for a purpose, not just a class, trumps all & wins the day. #smartstudents” (4:23pm, Thurs, Nov 19, 2015). Indeed, these were smart students who

carefully evaluated the tasks we presented and logically explained their rationale for the selection they made.

By the November 2015 meeting a few days later, we had the impression that the shark tank had been (unofficially) the most replicated part of the March meeting as Hank had predicted. During the interviews we heard liaisons *describing their teaching contexts* as they shared their versions of classroom and school shark tanks. We learned how liaisons implemented the shark tank concept in at least three different ways: a replication of our student panel for a group of teachers, a class evaluation of a teacher task, and student feedback to younger students.

Celia shared a time that her school brought in a panel of students for teachers who were finishing a literacy academy. She said:

We had five students come in. And just to hear their feedback and to see the teachers really thinking through their tasks through the eyes of the students. I mean they brought up things . . . that we as teachers really didn't think of.
(interview, November 20, 2015)

Thinking with the students in mind had shown teachers a new way to evaluate a task's meaningfulness and value. Students offered insights that "teachers really didn't think of," perhaps because of our concern with the content rather than how to ask students about the content.

I remember my conversation with another liaison and school literacy coach, Jacki, who shared her misfire with the student shark tank. After the March meeting, she immediately tried to use the shark tank with a colleague's students, but both of them were disappointed in the student feedback. The students in the reading course made generalized comments and disengaged themselves from the activity. She told me how reflecting on this misfire caused her to realize the scaffolding that she had missed and

needed to put in place. After she carefully and explicitly modeled for the students what they needed to do, the shark tank students in a remedial classroom amazed her with their new understanding and specific feedback. (remembered conversation, November 19, 2015)

Her story reminded me of our first meeting with the liaisons when Martin guided us in *thinking through personal contexts* about misfires with assignments. Our work that day began with rethinking our assignments and the way we approached writing them. Jacki's experience illustrated that misfires can happen in any teaching situation, and, though humbling, offer opportunities to reflect, revise, and redo. The success of her revised activity empowered Jacki to share her learning, both good and bad experiences, with other teachers in her building. As a new literacy coach and a former middle school teacher entering a high school environment, she saw the unanticipated benefits of this shared learning as building her credibility with high school teachers as well as in her *learning leadership capacity*.

In a less formal shark tank experience, Celia told us what happened when she shared a first draft of a writing assignment with her students:

When I did it in my classroom I did a little bit different variation. Just presented a task that I was kind of struggling with and wanted my students to engage with, and their feedback was incredible. I mean it was so insightful and it really pushed the assignment that I was sharing with them . . . [The shark tank] made me think about feedback in a different way. I hadn't sought out feedback from my students at the beginning of a task. (interview, November 21, 2015)

It was different for Celia to seek out student feedback before they engaged with the writing assignment rather than after they were finished. *Empowering* the students to be part of this task-development process with her "really pushed the assignment."

As a teacher of high school juniors, Mike described how he *experienced collaboration in a professional context* with a freshman teacher who worked with him to invite older students to be a shark tank panel for the freshman project presenters. He said:

The last time we met for task jam, we did the shark tank. Right? And that shark tank was something where I said, “Okay, I, I like this. I like putting students judging how something is working.” Right? I love that concept. And so one of the takeaways that I had from that in my own classroom—I teach honors juniors—and I went to the honors freshman teacher and I said, “What do you think about doing some academic mentoring?” . . . This year we added a freshman project and my juniors went down and watched the project and they did some shark tanking. (liaison interview, November 20, 2015)

Junior students engaged in providing feedback for their younger peers who may have been more receptive to them than to their teachers. Freshman students learned they needed projects with a little more razzle dazzle that would engage an audience.

Mike’s shark tank approach brought together teachers in different grade levels, but I wondered what the two teachers learned from this process. “Academic mentoring” implied *experiencing collaboration in professional contexts*, but using the shark tank as a peer feedback tool suggested Mike’s approach was less about empowering the students than maintaining a safe zone for the teachers. Rather than “shark tanking” the project assignments or actual task creation, the juniors were “judging” their peers’ products. This “rose” still had a few “thorns.”

Celia’s comment credited the shark tank as the initiative “rose” that affected her the most:

But I think it was probably the shark tank part of the Assignments Matter that really helped me get the engagement part that I was missing with my students...you know, just being able to pull the students into that process, too. And I don’t think that’s something I would have done without the Assignments matter experience that we had. (liaison interview, November 20, 2015)

Celia said that “the engagement part” was missing in her classroom, but with the shark tank, students were empowered to co-create meaningful assignments that mattered.

Back-talk

These vignettes, set within the resolution of the initiative narrative, shared the surprises, challenges, and take-aways of our year together with the liaisons. The challenges pointed to the back-talk of Common Core State Standards, which were ingrained in the Assignments Matter initiative work with the Literacy Design Collaborative task templates. Tension existed that teachers might not find the template task tools usable in a state that dismissed the standards on which the templates were based.

The surprises and take-aways balanced the back-talk but did not remove or mitigate its existence. They did, however, highlight the elements of trust that had developed throughout the initiative. Seeing the larger picture enabled Mike to trust the National Writing Project as a far-reaching organization. Martin pointed to the trust among peers that enabled us to make ourselves vulnerable in this initiative where our tasks were being evaluated. The shark tank both surprised and awed us in its lasting effects. It also illustrated the power of trusting the work and trusting other voices, in this case students.

We knew the initiative reached 674 educators and produced 327 tasks, with final submissions of 32 exemplary tasks and 54 good-to-go to the grant funder. The tangible evidence we submitted—participant logs, online task bank, completed rubrics, and liaison interviews—showed levels of our initiative’s success. We would not know if any of it was enough for the grant funder, but for us, we measured the initiative’s success in other

ways. Invited to sit at the table with space to work, the leadership team could trust the process and end with what we always believed to be magical results.

Cross-Situation Analysis

Through data analysis I sought answers to these research questions: How does narrative inquiry inform our understanding of a National Writing Project initiative to plan professional development? and What disrupts the narrative of a National Writing Project initiative to plan professional development? In pursuit of answers, I engaged with this study through the narrative inquiry dimensions of situation, continuity, and interaction. These dimensions informed my understanding of the initiative as one story among the many narratives we write as educators, teacher-leaders, professional development planners, and collaborators.

Using narrative inquiry to study National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative allowed me to understand the initiative as multi-dimensional. Teacher-leaders endeavoring to plan professional development as a leadership team should strive to regard each dimension in the framework as playing a role in their inquiry. Strengthening each dimension to maintain balance mitigates the inevitable back-talk within any planning situation. In this initiative, time, place, space, and purpose of a situation provided a narrative setting. Distilling the narrative moments as situations enabled me to point out the back-talk or the disruptions with which individuals had to act with, respond to, or react against within each situation. Pinpointing the back-talk within each situation enabled me to see and understand the disruptions in the initiative narrative. How back-talk was resolved built our continuity as professionals. This table summarizes the back-talk and resolution of each situation along the initiative narrative.

Table 7

Back-talk and Resolution within Situations

Situation	Back-talk	Resolution
1. What Are We Doing	Leadership team members perceived inadequacies within themselves.	The director invited leadership team members into a collaborative work environment.
3. Task Jam	Leadership team members experienced anxiety about the one-day professional development.	Meaningful collaboration among professional development participants empowered liaisons and leadership team members to trust in ourselves and the design of the initiative.
4. Don't Overwhelm Them	Leadership team members engaged in back and forth negotiations based on personal experiences and philosophies.	Leadership team members trusted in everyone's intelligence and investment to work collaboratively.
5. They Trust Us Now	Leadership team members felt anxious about the possibility of overwhelming the liaisons with too much new knowledge.	Liaisons trusted the meaningfulness of the initiative work and trusted the leadership team members to share effective new practices for the initiative.
6. The Deliverables	Leadership team members negotiated grant guidelines that others might argue were inconsistent with the organization's values.	Grant deliverables pushed the leadership team to think deeply about and trust in the work of creating meaningful writing assignments for students.
7. Buds, Thorns, and Roses	The relationship of the initiative to the Common Core State Standards posed challenges for liaisons whose states dropped these standards.	The shark tank illustrated the power of trusting in the meaningfulness of creating strong writing assignments and trusting students as the audience for tasks.

As seen in the summary of situations, inadequacy and fear in the first, second, and third situations were resolved by the extension of an invitation to work in a collaborative environment (planning, leading, participating) alongside one other rather than “us and them” or “supervisor and supervised.” The anxiety of planning new knowledge in the

fourth and fifth situations was resolved by a trust in both the leadership team members' abilities and the value of the initiative's work. Negotiating imposed structures and requirements in the sixth and seventh situations was resolved by trust in the meaningfulness of the work and its effects on the students for whom the work was designed.

The dimension of interaction pointed me to the language that we used in our work with one another to navigate back-talk. Participants interacted with one another in a productive way that gained positive results for the initiative and for our individual professional growth. Using the dimension of interaction pushed me to look deeper into the reasons for this positive productivity that could occur in spite of people's difficulties with back-talk. The interaction dimension enabled me to identify invitation and trust as two elements that could better inform my understanding of the initiative. Invitations to leadership indicated someone's trust in our abilities to be leaders. Our acceptance of the leadership roles indicated our trust in the meaningfulness of the work. Our willingness to expose our ideas and work samples indicated our trust in one another. Our invitation to students to be part of the initiative work indicated our trust in voices that were oftentimes marginalized.

The dimension of continuity called me to examine the leadership experiences that individuals brought to the initiative planning process. By knowing the participants' continuity, I could better understand the reasons that some participants acted or reacted with more assurance and confidence than other participants. Continuity showed how leadership team members drew on our own experiences with planning or presenting sessions. It also illustrated how in new ventures we tapped into our memories as

participants to recognize liaisons' needs for engaging with the materials, social interaction, and quiet reflection. Each situation in the initiative layered upon the previous one to extend the Writing Project experience continuity. The language of invitation and the development of trust through the dimension of interaction helped participants step forward to build their continuity with more leadership experiences.

When the leadership team members began planning this initiative, we did not know how that first situation would become part of a larger narrative. Only after the initiative ended, and I began to look through the kaleidoscope of situation, interaction, continuity, and back-talk did I see the story elements coming together on a plot diagram similar to the tool I used in my eighth-grade classroom. I am not suggesting that our complex lives as educators can be represented by a simple plot diagram. What I am suggesting is that the Assignments Matter initiative represented one short story in the grand narrative of education.

Through narrative mode of analysis using novelness (Bakhtin, 1981), the story elements of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution pointed to significant moments in our initiative narrative, helping me better understanding of a National Writing Project initiative to plan professional development. How we addressed emerging conflicts (back-talk or disruptions) were key to finding out what disrupted the initiative narrative. The completed plot diagram simplifies the complex narrative of the initiative.

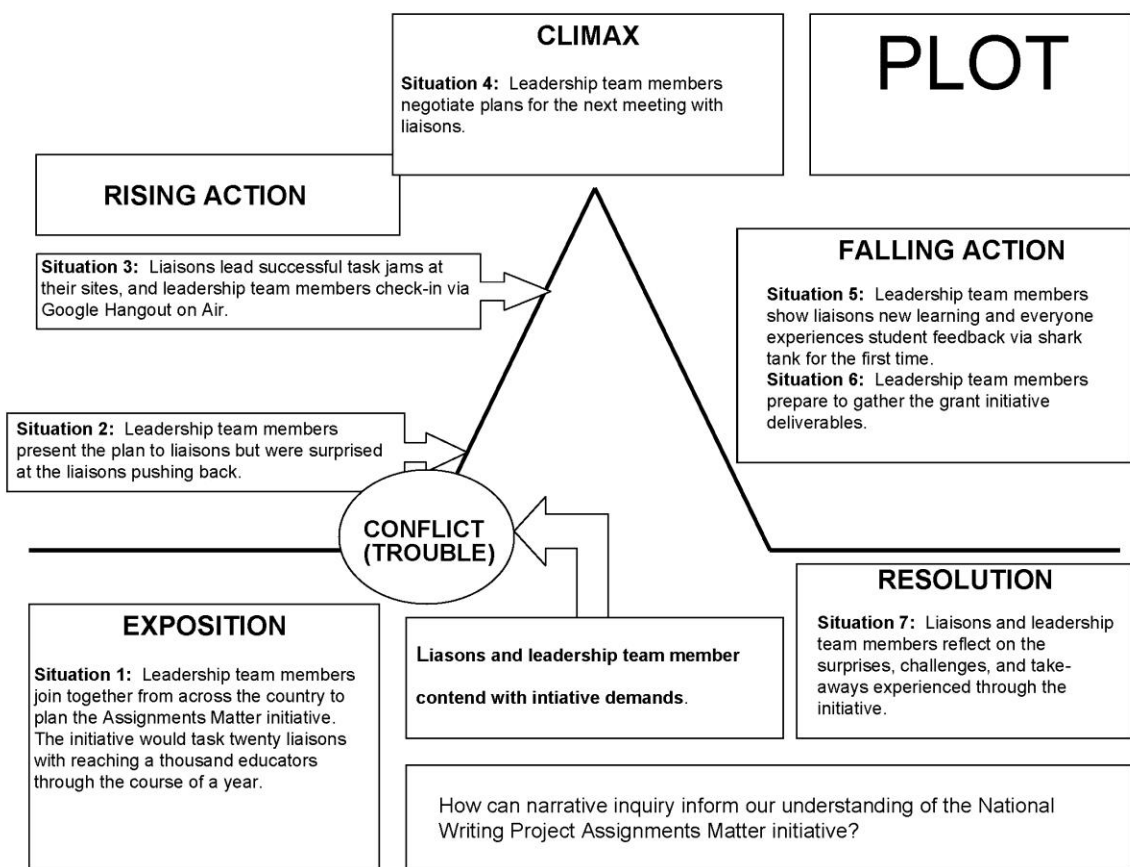


Figure 18. Plot diagram of initiative

New experiences in planning and leading caused us and the liaisons to doubt our efficacy in implementing an initiative for sites across the country, which can be seen in the rising action of Situations 1, 2, and 3. Later situations showed that collaboration and feedback was possible because our interactions with each other were based on trust, but only after we as a leadership team had reached a pivotal point in Situation 4. Similar to the disruptive back-talk in Situation 2 when we were calling upon the liaisons to trust us, the back-talk within Situation 4 called for us within the leadership team to trust each other. Because we were in leadership roles, our investment in the initiative needed to be unquestionable, and there was no question all of us were seeking the best experience for the liaisons. Being teacher-leaders with different teaching philosophies, however,

positioned us within the somewhat tense back-talk of negotiation. Our mission to keep teaching and writing at the forefront of our work enabled us to successfully steer the initiative to a positive resolution.

Narrative inquiry helped me demonstrate how a Writing Project initiative for planning professional development can be better understood through the multi-dimensional narrative inquiry framework using situation, interaction, and continuity. This understanding can inform what we know as participants and leaders and build our continuity for future initiatives to come.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to look through the dimensions of situation, interaction, and continuity to better understand the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative to plan professional development. I began this research study with these guiding questions:

1. How does narrative inquiry inform our understanding of a National Writing Project initiative to plan professional development?
2. What disrupts the narrative of a National Writing Project initiative to plan professional development?

Though I was already familiar with developing and leading small, local Writing Project professional development workshops, I had little knowledge about a leadership team's involvement in planning a larger-scale initiative to develop and implement professional development workshops in multiple states. This study explored the initiative situations, the continuity of experiences that participants brought to those situations, and the types of interactions among participants to develop an understanding of a National Writing Project initiative through a narrative inquiry lens.

Summary

The specific focus of this work was valued by the people invited to take on the task as well as those for whom the work had the greatest impact. In the case of this narrative inquiry, the National Writing Project found value in using the tools from the Literacy Design Collaborative and obtained funding to further that work in the Assignments Matter initiative. The leadership team, familiar with the effectiveness of the LDC modules, chose the most meaningful piece of the module-writing experience (to us)—task creation—to share with professional development participants across the country. Liaisons, through leading professional development workshops, valued the collaboration and reflection these tools inspired. We saw the liaisons' voices become stronger as they took ownership of the tools and adapted the professional development workshop design to their individual site needs. Finally, students voiced opinions about tasks, showing the value of the initiative work through the eyes of its audience. Voice, choice, and ownership empowered the study participants and can be implemented in other situations on larger and smaller scales.

Discussion

Understanding the Initiative

The initiative's specific focus on helping teachers create meaningful writing assignments for students aligned with best practices in developing professional development for writing instruction (Bangert-Drowns, Hurley, & Wilkinson, 2004; Fielder, 2010; Graham & Perin, 2007; Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Kihara, Graham, & Hawken, 2009; Newell, Beach, Smith, VanDerHeide, Kuhn, & Andriessen, 2011; Rogers & Graham, 2008; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson,

2010), and particularly for approaching new Common Core State Standards in the classroom and assessments (Lee, Cawthon, & Dawson, 2013; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010).

This study peered into the planning of an initiative to design and implement professional development and showed how the narrative inquiry dimensions described by Dewey (1936) as situation, interaction, and continuity could inform our understanding of the planning process. Using Dewey's narrative inquiry framework helped unpack the multi-dimensional nature of inquiry, in this case the inquiry into planning professional development within a large-scale initiative as well as the inquiry into understanding the planning process. By introducing back-talk (Schön, 1983) as the conflict element within situation, I extended Dewey's inquiry to add a narrative dimension. Situation, back-talk, continuity, and interaction are discussed in the sections that follow.

Situation and back-talk.

The situations were the setting for this narrative telling of a National Writing Project initiative. Describing the initiative in this way revealed the importance of addressing the back-talk that was inherent within every situation throughout the eighteen-month planning process. Back-talk challenged our personal ideologies (Vetter, Myers, & Hester, 2014), sometimes causing us to struggle with different ideological points-of-view. Strategic negotiations (Stillman, 2011) with the tensions caused by back-talk resulted in transformative change in attitudes and classroom practices (Borko, 2004; Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Meirink, Meijer, Verloop, & Bergen, 2009; Parise & Spillane, 2010; Whitney, 2008; Wood, 2010).

But far from being a problem to avoid, back-talk provided learning opportunities, even though they often made us uncomfortable (Wilson & Berne, 1999). Through collaboratively addressing the back-talk of the liaisons' fear at engaging in the work (Situation 1), the negotiations for planning the second big meeting (Situation 4), or the grant deliverables required at the initiative's end (Situation 6), team members could learn from these opportunities as a team and as individuals. This learning showed two important moves that are often bypassed in difficult education discussions. One, a small group of teachers took risks to respond to educational shifts and to navigate problematic situations. Second, a director handed over a situation potentially laden with back-talk and disruptions to a small group of teacher-leaders and accepted the solutions that this group generated. The following discussion shows how Situation 4 illustrates both these moves.

Teacher-leaders took risks that showed investment in each other's intelligence and abilities, which urged teacher-leaders to push past their discomfort in order to reach viable solutions (Collinson, 2012). Each person came to the initiative with ideological, philosophical, or pedagogical differences; yet, each person took risks to invest in others' viewpoints, in spite of discomforts those risks might have caused (Vetter, Myers & Hester, 2014). While planning for the second large meeting with liaisons in Situation 4, leadership team members focused on the goal of the initiative and the needs of the liaisons, even disagreeing about what those needs might be. Situation 4 relied on leadership team members coming to a consensus about the plans for the next meeting, so by focusing on the goal and not our own needs, each team member recognized each other's contribution to that end.

In handing over a situation to teacher-leaders, the director flipped the top-down dissemination process to encourage efforts from the ground, eliminating an hierarchical approach (Cordova, Hudson, Swank, Matthiesen, & Bertels, 2009; Taylor, Goeke, Klein, Onore & Geist, 2011; Warford, 2011). Situation 4 showed leadership team members veering slightly away from the original plan of the initiative. Moving forward with the instructional piece of the Literacy Design Collaborative template tasks was a risky move that pushed the limits of the grant initiative, but the director allowed the leadership team to make this decision. By doing so, she removed herself from the final decision and invested in the leadership team members' abilities to make the right call.

Successful navigation of the back-talk within situations also hinged upon invitation to collaborate in collective inquiry, as seen in Situations 1 and 2. This narrative inquiry highlighted the work that teacher leaders accomplished when we were invited to be team members in a collaborative inquiry space with a specific focus. The connotation of invitation versus summons or directive, seen throughout the narrative, implied meaningful work alongside rather than supervised by leaders of various "ranks" in the educational environment. This means that an invitation has the potential to flatten hierarchies but also suggests that the people who extend the invitations are as much a part of the inquiry as those who are invited, furthering the argument posed by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) that an inquiring stance "blurs the boundaries between leaders and followers" (p. 123). Indeed, leaders in this initiative became team members in joint efforts with both the director and the recruited liaisons at sites across the country to plan and implement effective professional development.

The language of invitation shifts the focus from dissemination of knowledge that limits teachers' voices (Martinovic et al., 2012) to knowledge-making through collaborative inquiry that involves all stakeholders in students' education, including administrators and teachers working together. At the beginning of the initiative and through problem-posing, leadership team members identified what they considered to be a meaningful focus area. Because this initiative started with "voice, choice, and ownership" (Wood, 2010, p. 133) successful learning happened.

Importantly, the language of invitation can be applied in any context and requires an inward look at how we think about ourselves as part of an inquiry, how we delegate work projects, and how we respond to directives versus invitations. Administrators, supervisors, and other leaders should carefully consider how language affects the working environment and work productivity. "Invitation" implies belief in the people being invited to join the work. It also shows trust in their capabilities to identify problem areas, design solutions, address back-talk within situations, and accomplish the work's goals.

Although the initiative reached sites across the country, even smaller district initiatives or school action plans would benefit from inviting leadership teams to collectively identify problem areas—problem-posing (Freire, 1970)—collaboratively gathering solution ideas, and implementing learning objectives that would benefit staff and students (Freire, 1970; Galligan, 2011). The findings from this study indicated the value of collaboratively facing and addressing back-talk rather than avoiding it, but doing so required trust in the work being done and belief in each member's investment and intelligence.

Interaction.

The Assignments Matter initiative stretched beyond one school or district to reach hundreds of educators near Writing Project sites across the country. The expansiveness of the project required team efforts in the planning process. Through reflection and inquiry, the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative empowered teacher growth and fostered leadership. By successfully navigating situations within the initiative, teacher-leaders developed trust in one another, in the work we were doing, and most of all in ourselves (Donnelly et al., 2005). The struggle for teacher empowerment continues (Jones, 2010), but authentic teacher learning characterized by inquiry served as a means of empowering teachers by strengthening our voices.

Teachers in the initiative collaboratively inquired into their instructional practices to create more meaningful writing assignments that would engage students (Shosh & Zales, 2005). Findings revealed the importance of reflective collaboration in non-hierarchical learning communities not only as integral to a professional development session (Borko, 2004 citing Grossman et al., 2001 and Stein et al., 1999; Galligan, 2011; Parsons, Metzger, Askew, & Carswell, 2011; Rodgers, 2002; Shosh & Zales, 2005; Warford, 2011) but as essential to its planning.

Collaborative inquiry required joint decision-making that respected the intellect and investment of each team member and liaison (Mockler, 2014). As Lewis and Fabos (2005) said, we shaped our identities by “what count[ed] as knowledge, who [got] to make it, who receive[d] it” (p. 474). Leadership team members took our seats at the discussion table of best practices and managed the many moving parts including the online community page, adaptations of the LDC tools for task creation and jurying, and

the demonstrations of workshop materials. In spite of some potentially difficult political environments such as the state in which the Common Core was “dropped” during the initiative, leadership team members and liaisons stayed invested in the work.

Far from disseminating writing strategies as is often the problem of structured programs and trainings implemented by schools and districts (Martinovic et al., 2012), each of us contributed our ideas and actions to form the “collective expertise” (Galligan, 2011, p. 55) necessary in a large initiative. To become experts collectively, we had to trust in the intelligence and investment of each team member individually, combating the deficit view of teaching oft headlined on news sites. This study revealed the complex interactions behind the decisions leadership team members made as we considered the learning objectives for participants and planned an invitational platform for open and difficult conversations. The back-talk of “confusions and uncertainties” (Schön, 1983, p. 164) throughout the narrative showed that the initiative planning process was not easy, but such a learning process rarely is (Wilson & Berne, 1999).

Continuity.

The process of planning the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative helped teacher-leaders recognize areas of concern and ask questions for further study and action, leading to engagement beyond planning this professional learning experience. The dimension of continuity permitted an exploration into the leadership team members’ experiences that shaped our present situations and future decision making. Continuity revealed the incremental successes (Kennedy, 2010) of each situation, but also prompted a step outside of the initiative time-line to reveal the reasons why celebrating such incremental successes was necessary. The liaisons’ limited

experience with leadership—continuity—informed our decisions to not overwhelm them with too much new material that would detract from their abilities to facilitate workshops at their local sites. Liaisons successfully stepped into these learner and leadership roles evidenced by the positive feedback from their directors and workshop participants, which led to empowered and amplified voices (Taylor, Goeke, Klein, Onore, & Geist, 2011).

Continuity also showed that time is a crucial consideration for teachers who want to engage in collaborative reflective inquiry and the planning of effective professional development. Building continuity of leadership and developing the trust to plan an initiative together required time. These findings indicate that time must be granted to teachers and teacher-leaders to plan collaboratively. Statutes, like those in Kentucky (KRS 156.095, 2010), that outline the needs for collaboration must have stronger support and implementation in district schools. This support for collaboration is particularly important for teacher-leaders who plan professional development for their colleagues.

This study showed that narrative inquiry can reveal new understandings of professional development planning. The principles of reflective inquiry as critical action (Freire, 1970) and as a way of knowing the world (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) mediated by dialogic collaboration led to the development of trust in each other, in ourselves, and in the initiative's goals.

Telling the Story

The story of the initiative developed through Polkinghorne's narrative mode of analysis and narrative smoothing highlighted Bakhtin's (1981) three elements of polyphony, chronotope, and carnival within novelness. These elements are discussed in the sections below.

Polyphony.

The element of polyphony within novelness indicates a flattening of hierarchies, an equalizing of voices within a narrative. Invitation was one way in which hierarchies were flattened between leaders and participants. By extending invitations for us to join the initiative and later emphasizing our togetherness in the goal to plan and implement professional development for one thousand people, Sam demonstrated the significance of not privileging single voices over others. I extended this concept to seek balance among voices within the narrative by including leadership team members who planned the initiative, the director who led us, the liaisons who implemented the plan, and students for whom we were creating meaningful writing assignments.

While polyphony offered equalization among participants in this education narrative, this study privileged the voices of those who volunteered their views in meetings, interviews, and in online spaces. Even as the hierarchical ladder was made less visible, unfortunately so too were the participants who chose to speak more quietly or not at all.

Chronotope.

Bakhtin (1981) described chronotope as “knots of narrative [that] are tied and untied” (p. 250). I identified these knots as situation back-talk and they became the organizing structures around which the narrative took shape. Each situation along the initiative time-line was disrupted in some way, which created a narrative conflict that participants had to resolve or “untie.”

While recognizing the “inseparability of space and time” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84), I also pushed against this inseparability by moving backwards, forwards, and outside the

initiative time-line to understand participants' continuity—their range and depth of knowledge of planning and implementing professional development. Participants shared their experiences from previous initiatives, classroom interactions, and early introductions to the Writing Project, all of which stepped outside and beyond the September 2014 to November 2015 time-line of the Assignments Matter initiative. These experiences, however, shaped the participants' understanding of and attitudes toward planning and implementing a larger-scale professional development.

Carnival.

Carnival within novelty upturns the expected to give rise to marginalized voices and lays bare “any sort of conventionality” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 162). Notably, students' voices heard in the shark tank descriptions in “They Trust Us Now” (Situation 5) and “Into the End with Buds, Thorns, and Roses” (Situation 7) stressed the value of our work and for whom we were designing meaningful writing assignments. Students were empowered to provide feedback, which gave us the means and the purpose for improving writing tasks.

There was also an element of exposure and vulnerability in task jam participant feedback to one another's writing tasks. Martin pointed to this “laying bare” in the final situation as a crossroads of sorts. Participants could become vulnerable with their peers and share their writing assignments; in turn, other participants made this process easier through invitation and mutual trust in each other's investment in the work to create meaningful writing assignments for their students.

Trustworthiness

Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) and Shenton (2004) suggested steps to address the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of a qualitative research study and increase its trustworthiness. I discuss the trustworthiness of my study in the following sections.

Credibility

Qualitative research calls for familiarity with the culture of participants and participating organizations. As a 2011 Writing Project fellow, I have accepted invitations for leadership roles by presenting at local and state conferences, leading professional development individually and with team members, and creating and field-testing Literacy Design Collaborative modules. Such involvement enhanced my knowledge of the National Writing Project mission and goals and made me wonder about the process of leadership development and how an organization such as this succeeds at its task.

Though this study relied on purposive sampling, I as the participant-observer researcher had no role in selecting the individuals who would be chosen for leadership roles in the initiative. This study focused on a small leadership team of six members who knew each other and had become friends in previous initiative work together. Previous positive experiences with the National Writing Project influenced views of invitations and how team members shared their experiences during interviews and meetings. Familiarity among the study participants influenced the development of trust, deepening the relationships that created openness among study participants.

Triangulation through multiple and varied data sources and member checking provided another means of establishing credibility. Data for this study included

individual interviews with leadership team members using an interview protocol developed by the researcher as well as liaison interviews using an interview protocol developed jointly by the leadership team members. Leadership team member interviews were transcribed and reviewed by interviewees.

Audio recordings of leadership team meetings were minimally influenced by the researcher and provided another entry point for data collection. These meetings, in most cases led by the director, included action steps and group conversations that documented the professional development planning process. The first face-to-face leadership team meeting debrief session was audio-recorded, transcribed, and submitted to the leadership team members for review. Likewise, other recordings, transcripts, and study findings were made available to leadership team members. Comments and suggestions from leadership team members were incorporated into subsequent drafts of the study's findings.

Transferability

This study provided detailed and “thick” descriptions of the participants and the meeting formats (both online and face-to-face) to provide “adequate comparisons with other samples” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 314). Also detailed within the study are the data collection methods including the types of data, number of data collection points, and duration of data collection.

The use of this study can reach beyond possible limitations to areas that teachers seek for their own professional growth and leadership development. This study focused on a particular leadership team made up of teacher-leaders who sought professional growth outside of their school districts. This study's findings can guide organizations,

both in education and the private sector, that seek to develop leadership teams for problem-posing and inquiry.

As well, budget considerations are pushing schools to consider alternative means for designing required professional development opportunities for their teachers. Rather than seek outside and costly sources for leading professional development, school administrators may look at teacher-leaders within their own schools to plan and implement ongoing learning for classroom teachers. This study and its recommendations can guide administrators with particular strategies for inviting teacher-leaders to problem-pose and inquire into the planning of professional development.

Dependability

The narrative inquiry research design of this study followed guidelines set forth by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Clandinin (2013), and Kim (2016) with the foundational narrative inquiry framework of Dewey (1938). Through this design, the established definitions of situation, interaction, and continuity provided boundaries that limited the possibility of loose interpretations of the framework or applications of its design.

The minutiae (Shenton, 2004) of the work done in the field provide the details necessary to see the study through the eyes of the researcher. I also provided decision-making points regarding audio transcripts and events in the initiative as well as the unpredictable pitfalls of technology that impeded some data collection. Summaries or transcripts of these events in the initiative were reviewed by leadership team members who provided agreement checks regarding their possible significance to the study.

Confirmability

In Chapter One, I described my early interest in the National Writing Project and my involvement in leadership positions within this organization. Explicitly foregrounding my values and potential biases demonstrated my self-awareness of possible personal assumptions that could surface during data collection and analysis.

To aid in confirmability, this study's methods and procedures were described in detail, offering a "complete picture" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 311) for the readers. I outlined in Chapter Three the methods by which data were collected and analyzed and included figures to guide understanding of the first and second coding cycles as well as the narrative mode of analysis in a step-by-step process.

Future Research

After beginning a Writing Project journey in the summer of 2011, I wrote this journal entry: "But it seems like there is so much left to do." (journal entry, June 30, 2011). In this initiative, we continued the work of showing teachers new instructional strategies for teaching writing. But the work is never finished. Sam said:

But, like, here we are doing this work. And there's so much damn work to do. Like, I know, I'll call you again. And we'll be together again. And we'll have more work. We'll be here with our sleeves rolled up. (Sam, leadership team debrief, November 21, 2015)

But as I rolled up my sleeves with the team and learned of the back-talk within the initiative's narrative, I realized our situations together built the trust and continuity necessary to trudge forward with "so much damn work to do."

Not only does education today provide plenty of work to do, research on that work is necessary as well. "What Are We Doing?" (Situation 1) and "The Turn" (Situation 2) highlighted the language of invitation leading up to and within the context

of the National Writing Project Assignments Matter initiative. Further research in other NWP initiatives is needed to determine how the language of invitation influences people's investment in the work and the quality of work produced. Research in an elementary or secondary school setting could investigate the effects of invitation on teacher and/or student buy-in regarding special programs or incentives. Exploring the use of invitation could importantly identify how this language can be used to mitigate the back-talk or disruptions in situations.

The language of invitation affected the development of trust in the Assignments Matter initiative. Research is needed to further determine the relationship between the language of invitation and the development of trust in small groups tasked with identifying problems and finding solutions in education initiatives or school improvement plans. In higher education, the language of invitation and the development of trust would have special significance in teacher education. More research might provide insights on invitational language and its role in teacher education and district partnerships.

“The Deliverables” (Situation 6) discussed the grant deliverables that structured the initiative. Many Writing Project sites are at odds with the requirements dictated by grant funding. Future research is needed to understand the relationship between initiative grant deliverables and their effects on National Writing Project values or how National Writing Project values influence the deliverables gathered in grant work. Other educational institutions such as universities would benefit from research that explored how grants influence their missions, visions, and values as well as how their values influence the types of grant work they pursue.

“A Researcher’s Journey”—Storying Amy

Sharing the initiative story is important because the climate in education right now needs the uplifting momentum of encouraging narratives. In the words of Maxine Greene (2005), this narrative inquiry allowed us to tell our stories and shape our narratives to ground new learning in what we already knew (p. 111). The leadership team members’ individual stories importantly converged in the narrative of the initiative and are essential in the storying of myself. This National Writing Project initiative brought together people who were invested in the work and had demonstrated intelligence in teaching writing even though we did not recognize our own strengths.

Aileen said being in the classroom “fills her,” and she inspires me with her devotion to do what is best for her students. She continuously sets high expectations for herself, which may be why her principal said she “leads from the classroom.” As the only participant who did not provide his or her own pseudonym, she asked me to select one for her. I chose Aileen because it means “light one” or “bright one” and also “pleasant.”

Sasha sought help from a content-area teacher she trusted, a fellow leadership team member, because she wanted to present the best available tools to her social studies teachers in the most understandable, strategic way she could find. She asked for assistance from us at other times, too, when she needed to work through classroom and school issues. Sasha’s trust in me and the rest of us shaped our confidence in ourselves but also showed us the importance of being good listeners and questioners. She appreciated being able to speak her mind among us, causing me to consider the fundamental nature of trust in a professional community such as ours.

My friend and colleague Jenny wanted to improve her writing assignments, so she used the tools discussed and developed by this leadership team. In her search for deeper knowledge about literacy in the content areas, particularly social studies, she entered a doctoral program shortly after the initiative began. Jenny's unassuming nature and humble disposition taught me that leading is more about looking at the people walking beside you than looking at them over your shoulder.

Hank, our other team member, reminded me to look at the proof. Data showed Hank the impressive impact of National Writing Project work and pushed him to seek more and grow more as a teacher-leader. He also valued plans that were proven to be effective and knew he could immediately use the Assignments Matter initiative framework for the roll-out of a large technology grant in his district.

Martin's local Writing Project recently posted his story about a child's experience moving to a large city under heartbreaking circumstances. I am inclined to believe it is nonfiction and that his skill in sharing stories over the years opened his students' eyes and hearts to the narratives they had within them. With his vignettes and vintage photos as invitations to writing, Martin helped us all to find stories within us too.

Through these team members and Sam's continued insistence that we are smarter together than we any of us can be on our own, I learned that we all feel inadequacies and doubts about our roles as teachers, leaders, followers, researchers, and students. Sam and Sasha taught me that naming these doubts, acknowledging that others have similar anxieties, and building communities to "walk into the dark together" are qualities of a leader. I learned to embrace these qualities as a researcher.

This narrative inquiry study, though enriching in its ability to connect me with phenomenal teacher-leaders and a time-tested organization, tested my skills as a budding researcher and laid bare the many doubts I had in myself. Appropriately nervous about designing a narrative inquiry study for a dissertation, I initially over-complicated the framework and attempted to dissect back-talk into the smallest components of positive and negative authoritative and internally persuasive discourses and then layer them over the framework of situation, interaction, and continuity. Data collection and early analysis proved this to be an insurmountable task to complete for an entire initiative within the scope of a dissertation study. Paring down to the essentials of Dewey's (1938) and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) description of the narrative inquiry framework and Schön's (1983) disruptive back-talk enlightened me to the possibilities for delving deeply into a rich narrative. Having now explored the initiative as a whole and with a confident grasp of a narrative inquiry study design, I am eager to see where that next step might lead if I do examine the many components within one situation's back-talk.

One other decision milestone shaped my study experience. Early findings indicated the importance of invitation in restoring waning liaison confidence at the start of the initiative. I knew this event was an important illustration for the dimension of continuity but struggled with how to write the findings into appropriately-labeled headings of situation, interaction, and continuity. When I thought about stepping in and out of story situations such as the one in "The Turn" I discovered I could display the findings as mini-narratives. At that point this study had truly become my own. "The Turn" was how we named the events of that anxious November meeting when we rolled out the initiative to site representatives and it was, indeed, the narrative turning point in

my writing. I returned to the other situations to craft them into narratives and grew as a more analytical and playful writer. I trusted myself. With confidence, I used the tools Polkinghorne (1995), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Clandinin (2013), Kim (2016), and Dewey (1910, 1938) had designed for narrative mode of analysis and narrative inquiry and permitted myself to creatively display my findings.

Sam said that stepping on the other side of a scary experience makes a person realize she can do things she did not realize she could do. I end this study envisioning my next one because I now know I have the ability within me. Far from exhausted at the end of a dissertation journey, I am exhilarated by the possibilities that exist in my future as an educator, a researcher, and a writer. Stepping forward into another scary unknown, I know a new narrative awaits.

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APPENDIX A

University of Louisville Institutional Review Board Approval



Human Subjects Protection Program Office
MedCenter One – Suite 200
501 E. Broadway
Louisville, KY 40202-1798
Office: 502.852.5188 Fax: 502.852.2164

DATE: November 17, 2014
TO: Penny B Howell
FROM: The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board
IRB#: 14.0987
STUDY TITLE: National Writing Project: Professional Learning through Reflective Inquiry
REFERENCE #: 339572
DATE OF REVIEW: 11/16/2014
IRB STAFF CONTACT: Name: Jacqueline S. Powell
Phone: 852-4101
Email: jspowe01@Louisville.edu

This study was reviewed on 11/16/2014 and determined by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board that the study is exempt according to 45 CFR 46.101(b) under category 1: Instructional strategies in established educational settings .

Documents/Attachments reviewed and approved:

Submission Components			
Interview Guide	Version 1.0	11/11/2014	Approved
Protocol	Version 1.0	10/30/2014	Approved
Consent	Version 1.0	10/30/2014	Approved

1099 Information (If Applicable)

As a reminder, in compliance with University policies and Internal Revenue Service code, all payments (including checks, gift cards and gift certificates) to research subjects must be reported to the University Controller's Office. Petty Cash payments must also be monitored by the issuing department and reported to the Controller's Office. Before issuing compensation, each research subject must complete a W-9 form. For additional information, please contact the Controller's Office at 852-8237 or controll@louisville.edu

Please be advised that any study documents submitted with this protocol should be used in the form in which they were approved. Since this study is Exempt the documents do not contain the IRB approval stamp.

Since this study has been approved under the exempt category indicated above, no additional reporting, such as submission of Progress Reports for continuation reviews, is needed. If your research focus or activities change, please submit an Amendment to the IRB for review to ensure that the indicated exempt category still applies. Best wishes for a successful study. Please send all inquiries to our office email address at hspofc@louisville.edu

Thank you for your submission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter M. Swartz".

Peter M. Quesada, Ph.D., Chair

Social/Behavioral/Educational Institutional Review Board

PMQ/jsp

*Full Accreditation since June 2005 by the Association for the Accreditation of
Human Research Protection Programs, Inc.*



APPENDIX B

Literacy Design Collaborative Task Templates

TASK 1 After researching [informational texts] on [content], write an essay or substitute that argues your position, pro or con, on [content]. Support your position with evidence from your research. L2 Be sure to acknowledge competing views. L3 Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate, clarify, and support your position.	TASK 2 [Question.] After reading [literature or informational texts], write an [essay or substitute] that addresses the question and support your position with evidence from the text(s). L2 Be sure to acknowledge competing views. L3 Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate, clarify, and support your position.	TASK 3 After researching [informational text] on [content], write an [essay or substitute] that compares [content] and argues [content]. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the texts.	TASK 4 [Question.] After reading [literature or informational texts], write an [essay or substitute] that compares [content] and argues [content]. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the texts.	TASK 5 After researching [informational texts] on [content], write an [essay or substitute] that discusses [content] and evaluates [content]. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the texts.
TASK 11 After researching [informational texts] on [content], write a report or substitute that defines and explains [content]. Support your discussion with evidence from your research. L2 What Implications can you draw?	TASK 12 [Question.] After reading [literature or informational texts], write an [essay, report, or substitute] that defines and explains [content]. Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s). L2 What Implications can you draw?	TASK 13 After researching [informational texts] on [content], write a [report or substitute] that describes [content]. Support your discussion with evidence from your research.	TASK 14 [Question.] After reading [literature or informational texts], write an [essay, report, or substitute] that describes [content] and addresses the question.	TASK 15 After researching [informational texts] on [content], write a [report or substitute] that relates how [content].
TASK 21 [Question.] After reading [literature or informational texts], write a [report, essay, or substitute] that addresses the question and analyzes [content] providing examples to illustrate and clarify your analysis. What conclusions or implications can you draw? In your discussion, address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. L3 Identify any gaps or unanswered questions. All: Include a bibliography of your sources.	TASK 22 After researching [informational texts] on [content], write a [report or substitute] that compares [content]. L2 In your discussion, address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. L3 Identify any gaps or unanswered questions.	TASK 23 [Question.] After reading [literature or informational texts], write a/an [essay, report, or substitute] that compares [content]. L2 In your discussion, address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. L3 Identify any gaps or unanswered questions.	TASK 24 After researching [informational texts] on [content], write a [report or substitute] that examines the causes of [content], and explains the effects [content]. What implications can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s).	TASK 25 [Question.] After reading [literature or informational texts] on [content], write a report or substitute that examines the causes of [content] and explains the effect(s) [content]? What implications can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s).

TASK 6 [Question.] After reading [literature or informational texts], write an [essay or substitute] that discusses [content] and evaluates [content]. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the texts.	TASK 7 After researching [informational texts] on [content], write an [essay or substitute] that identifies a problem [content] and argues for a solution. Support your position with evidence from your research. L2 Be sure to examine competing views. L3 Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.	TASK 8 [Question.] After reading [literature or informational texts] on [content], write an [essay or substitute] that identifies a problem [content] and argues for a solution [content]. Support your position with evidence from the text(s). L2 Be sure to examine competing views. L3 Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.	TASK 9 After researching [informational texts] on [content], write an [essay or substitute] that argues the causes of [content] and explains the effects [content]. What implications can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s).	TASK 10 After reading [literature or informational texts] on [content], write an [essay or substitute] that argues the causes of [content] and explains the effects [content]. What implications can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s).
TASK 16 [Question.] After reading [literature or informational texts] on [content], write a [report or substitute] that relates how [content].	TASK 17 After researching [informational texts] on [content], developing a hypothesis, and conducting an experiment examining [content], write a laboratory report that explains your procedures and results and confirms or rejects your hypothesis. What conclusions can you draw?	TASK 18 After researching [informational texts] on [content], write a [report or substitute] that explains [content]. What conclusions or implications can you draw? Cite at least [number] sources, pointing out key elements from each source. L2 In your discussion, address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. L3 Also, identify any gaps or unanswered questions. All levels: Include a bibliography of sources.	TASK 19 [Question.] After reading [literature or informational texts], write a/an [essay or substitute] that explains [content]. What conclusions or implications can you draw? Cite at least [number] sources, pointing out key elements from each source. L2 In your discussion address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. L3 Identify any gaps or unanswered questions. All levels: Include a bibliography of your sources.	TASK 20 After researching [informational texts] on [content], write a [report or substitute] that analyzes [content], providing evidence to illustrate and clarify your analysis. What conclusions or implications can you draw from your research? L2 In your discussion, address the credibility and origin of sources in view of your research topic. L3 Identify any gaps or unanswered questions. All: Include a bibliography of your sources.
TASK 26 After researching [informational texts] on [content], write a [narrative or substitute] that describes [content]. L2 Use stylistic devices (e.g. imagery, tone, humor, suspense) to develop a narrative. L3 Use a variety of techniques to convey multiple storylines.	TASK 27 After reading [literature or informational texts] about [content], write a [narrative or substitute] from the perspective of [content]. L2 Use stylistic devices (e.g. imagery, tone, humor, suspense) to develop a narrative. L3 Use a variety of techniques to convey multiple storylines.	TASK 28 After researching [informational texts] on [content], write a [narrative or substitute] that relates [content] and the events that [content]. L2 Use stylistic devices (e.g. imagery, tone, humor, suspense) to develop a narrative.	TASK 29 [Question.] After reading [literature or informational texts] about [content], write a [narrative or substitute] that relates [content]. L2 Use stylistic devices (e.g. imagery, tone, humor, suspense) to develop a narrative.	Key to Task Type <div> <div>Argumentation</div> <div>Informational/expl.</div> <div>Narrative</div> </div>

APPENDIX C

Literacy Design Collaborative Jurying Rubric

LDC TEACHING TASK SCORING GUIDE			
Category	Work in Progress	Good to Go	Exemplary
GQ1: Does the teaching task, along with texts, content and student product, have a clear and coherent purpose and focus, allow for diverse responses, and require students to respond to texts?			
Task Clarity & Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Template type uses a writing mode that does not match the intended purpose of the prompt. Task purpose is overly broad or narrow. Prompt wording is unclear. Prompt wording, student background, or overview of the task biases students toward a particular response. Task is answerable without using the texts or instructional scaffolding in module. Background statement may not frame task for students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Template task uses a writing mode that matches the intended purpose of the prompt. Task purpose is focused. Prompt wording is clear. Prompt wording is unbiased, leaving room for diverse responses. Prompt wording, content, texts, and student product are aligned to task purpose (a "good fit"). Task is text dependent, requiring students to go beyond prior knowledge to use evidence from the texts in their responses. Background statement frames task for students. 	("Good to Go" characteristics and...) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task is worded precisely to give students a clear and focused purpose for writing and unambiguous directions. Prompt, texts, content, and student product are tightly aligned (are close to a "perfect fit") to task purpose. Task provides a pattern that can be used as a model to create other teaching tasks in the discipline.
GQ2: Does the teaching task build students' content knowledge, enduring understandings, and complex, higher order thinking skills central to the discipline?			
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a weak connection to content central to the discipline. Oversimplifies a topic, OR does not require students to engage in analytic reading and thinking skills. Includes content or skill standards that are not relevant to the task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses content central to the discipline and grade level CCSS reading standards, requiring students to build strong content knowledge. Engages students in a range of analytic reading and thinking skills. 	("Good to Go" characteristics and...) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses big ideas or enduring understandings central to the discipline. Engages students in complex, higher-order thinking skills specific to the discipline.

LDC TEACHING TASK SCORING GUIDE				
Category	Work in Progress	Good to Go	Exemplary	
GQ3: Are the provided text(s) engaging, authentic, accessible, tightly relevant to the prompt, and appropriately complex, requiring students to apply CCSS reading skills?				
Text(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Are loosely aligned or misaligned to the purpose of the task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Are useful for providing content and evidence to be used in addressing the task.	("Good to Go" characteristics and...)	
Score:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bias students toward a particular response.Are too difficult or too easy for the range of student ability.Include so many texts or allow so much student choice that it will be difficult to support reading closely and provide appropriate instruction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do not bias students toward a particular response.Are accessible to most target students and appropriately complex, requiring them to apply grade level CCSS reading skills to comprehend and analyze content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Are engaging, tightly relevant (indispensable), and authentic.Are tightly aligned to the task purpose.Represent central modes of discourse in the discipline.Are carefully selected, excerpted, or modified to provide texts with varied complexity (using either quantitative or qualitative measures) appropriate to students' reading ability.	
GQ4: Does the teaching task engage students in applying CCSS writing skills to produce writing in a genre that is appropriately challenging, central to the discipline, and appropriate for the task content?				
Student Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is inappropriate to the discipline, content, or challenge of the task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is appropriate for the discipline and content, and coherent with the purpose of the task.	("Good to Go" characteristics and...)	
Score:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is too difficult or too easy for the range of student ability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is accessible to all students and intellectually challenging, requiring them to apply CCSS writing skills to demonstrate their content understanding and CCSS reading skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Authentically engages students in rhetorical modes and types of writing central to the discipline.	

HOLISTIC SCORE FOR LDC TEACHING TASK	
Rating (check one)	Description
Exemplary	The teaching task creates academic contexts for applying grade level CCSS reading and writing standards, and engages students in reading texts closely, as well as writing that is text-based, appropriate, and authentic for the discipline, purpose, and/or audience. Teaching task is text-dependent and has a clear, focused, and coherent purpose and precise elements overall. Task prompt, texts, and student product are tightly aligned to content and to the purpose of the teaching task. Teaching task addresses content and big ideas central to the discipline; engages students in applying higher order thinking skills specific to the discipline; and employs carefully selected or customized, relevant text(s) of varying complexity suited to the range of students in the target grade level. Focus of teaching task is central to the discipline or course and has broad applicability.
Good to Go	The teaching task creates academic contexts for applying grade level CCSS reading and writing standards, and engages students in reading texts closely, as well as writing that is text-based and appropriate for the discipline, purpose, and/or audience. Teaching task is text-dependent and has a clear, focused, and coherent purpose overall. Task prompt, texts, and student product are aligned to the content and purpose of the teaching task. Teaching task addresses content central to the discipline; engages students in applying a range of analytic reading and thinking skills; and employs useful text(s) that are appropriate for most students at the target grade level.
Work In Progress	Needs revision for reasons listed below.
Not scored	Does not fit the LDC Rules of the Road.
<div> <div>Juror</div> <div>Formative Feedback for Revision</div> </div>	

APPENDIX D

Researcher-Developed Leadership Team Interview Protocol

1. How has the National Writing Project affected your views on teaching writing?
2. (Follow-up if the words “transformation” or synonyms are spoken/written: What does transformation look like?)
3. What Writing Project initiatives have you been involved with since the summer institute?
4. Why have you decided to stay involved in NWP leadership initiatives?
5. Describe your beliefs about writing and teaching writing.
6. How has being involved in this NWP leadership initiative impacted you? (possible suggestions for avenues of discussion: as a teacher? As a leader?)
7. Describe the most powerful aspects of the professional development planning process. (possible suggestions for avenues of discussion: questioning, charting, writing time, facilitator roles)
8. What aspects of the professional development planning experience might you implement in other leadership roles or in the classroom?

APPENDIX E

Leadership Team-Developed Liaison Interview Protocol

Common Core State Standards

- How has the Common Core impacted your teaching? (How you think about professional development?)
- How has your thinking changed around the CCSS? (college and career readiness)
- Which part of the Task Jam had the greatest impact on your thinking as a teacher?

Professional Development

- When you tell others about the work you have done with this project, what do you tell them?
- How did you change the Task Jam from the first to the second time you did it? (Why did you make the changes that you did?)
- Has any part of this process impacted how you prepare and work through professional development at your school?
- Would you hold another Task Jam on your own or with your Writing Project?
- *What support would you hope to receive from NWP?*

Leadership

- When you first started this journey, what did you want to get out of it? Did you get what you expected?
- How did working with other teacher leaders/liaisons influence your thinking about this work?
- How has this experience helped you grow as a leader?
- What have been some connections you have made with people that have helped you deepen or change your thinking?

CURRICULUM VITAE

Amy Sills Vujaklija

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Philosophy of Education and Teaching

I believe education should assist children and adults in becoming lifelong learners and part of a larger network. My philosophy has been built upon inquiry and reflection. Through reflective inquiry and action research, my students and I inquire about the world within and without our classroom spaces in search for best practices and new approaches. In teaching undergraduate writing courses, I implement strategies learned within the National Writing Project network as well as other professional organizations and communities. Being a lifelong learner is not only my goal for those I teach but for myself.

Education

University of Louisville College of Education Doctorate of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction (anticipated)	Louisville, KY May 2016
Spalding University College of Education Master of Arts in Teaching, Middle and Secondary ELA	Louisville, KY August 2004
University of Louisville 36 Graduate hours in English Literature/Composition	Louisville, KY 1994-2002
University of Kentucky Bachelor of Arts, English	Lexington, KY May 1994

Certifications

Teaching Certification 5-12 English/Language Arts
Louisville Writing Project Fellow, Certified Teacher Consultant 2011
Illinois Teaching Certification 6-12 English/Language Arts Provisional Educator
Endorsement (*Professional Educator License in process*)

Teaching Experience

Graduate School

EDAP 696 Teaching Writing P-12
(Face-to-Face)

EDAP 696 Teaching Writing P-12
(Hybrid)

EDAP 636 Advanced Reading Methods
(Online)

English 101

English 102 (face-to-face and online)

Middle/Secondary

12th Grade English *collaborative, regular, honors*

11th Grade English *collaborative, honors*

8th Grade Language Arts

8th Grade Literacy Workshop

7th Grade Reading

Undergraduate

English 099

Employment

Prairie State College, Chicago Heights, IL

August 2015-Present

Adjunct Instructor

Monitored, facilitated, and assessed undergraduate student college composition progress in English 101, English 102 (online), and accelerated English 099 courses.

University of Louisville, Louisville, KY

January 2013-Present

Assistant Instructor/Adjunct Instructor

January 2013 – Present

- ❖ Redesigned curriculum, syllabus, and hallmark assessment task for the graduate course Teaching Writing K-12 EDAP 693.
- ❖ Trained with the University of Louisville Delphi Center to design, implement, and teach online and hybrid courses.
- ❖ Implemented hybrid online/face-to-face class structure for the Teaching Writing class to be focused on inquiry and action research.
- ❖ Monitored, facilitated, and assessed graduate student progress in the Teaching Writing course for three spring semesters.
- ❖ Worked with literacy team to design online course sequence for Reading Endorsement.
- ❖ Monitored, facilitated, and assessed graduate student progress in the Advanced Reading Methods in a new, online format.

Graduate Research Assistant

July 2013 – July 2014

- ❖ Documented progress of partnership between the university's college of education and one middle school within the local school district through data collection, data preparation, and field notes.
- ❖ Prepared and presented demonstrations of university faculty and student achievements.
- ❖ Co-taught teacher preparation classes.
- ❖ Planned collaboratively with middle school teacher

Meade County Board of Education**August 2003 – June 2015****Meade County HS 11th and 12th Gr. English****Aug 2014 – May 2015**

- ❖ Facilitated six daily classes of 20-30 students.
- ❖ Co-taught with certified special education instructor to differentiate learning.
- ❖ Provided intervention tools for meeting College and Career Readiness benchmarks.
- ❖ Implemented the Common Core State Standards for Literacy in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Language.

Stuart Pepper Middle School 8th Grade Language Arts Aug 2003 – June 2013

- ❖ Facilitated seven daily classes consisting of 20-30 students for grade 8.
- ❖ Utilized multiple assessments in compliance with district and state requirements to inform instruction.
- ❖ Used innovative methods and materials to produce effective learning experiences including cooperative learning, thematic instruction and differentiation.
- ❖ Developed daily lesson plans and testing materials.

Stuart Pepper Middle School 8th Grade Literacy Workshop Aug 2010 – May 2012

- ❖ Designed and implemented new reading/writing workshop to supplement language arts curriculum.
- ❖ Developed Literacy Design Collaborative Module and lessons based on workshop process and assignments.

University of Louisville, Louisville, KY**August 2002 – May 2003****Adjunct Instructor**

Monitored, facilitated, and assessed undergraduate student college composition progress in English 101 and English 102 courses.

Honors and Achievements**Louisville Writing Project Fellow****June 2011 – May 2012**

- ❖ Participated in competitive Invitational Summer Institute
- ❖ Collaborated with teachers to create lesson designs, review peer writing, and analyze presentation demonstrations.
- ❖ Presented demonstrations of classroom instruction at fall and spring conferences

Grants and Initiatives**National Writing Project****June 2011 – Nov 2015****NWP Assignments Matter Leadership Team****May 2014 – Nov 2015**

- ❖ Participated with leadership team members to design professional development focused on the Literacy Design Collaborative assignment creation.
- ❖ Collaboratively created online spaces for nationwide communication among six leadership team members and twenty Writing Project site facilitators.
- ❖ Presented demonstrations of professional development design for facilitators to lead within local sites.
- ❖ Collected data from leadership team members and facilitators to analyze for PhD dissertation on reflective inquiry within teacher leadership.

Kentucky Writing Project Network

Literacy in the Common Core Leadership Team

April 2012 – May 2014

- ❖ Collaborated with teacher leaders through the Literacy Design Collaborative and grant initiative funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- ❖ Designed modules, implemented the LDC design, and analyzed student work.
- ❖ Facilitated professional development sessions, workshops, and conferences focusing on the Common Core State Standards and elements of the Literacy Design Collaborative.

Collaborative Center for Literacy Development

June 2012 – June 2014

Adolescent Literacy Project Facilitator

June 2012, June 2013, June 2014

(formerly Leveraged Adolescent Literacy Learning Initiative)

- ❖ Collaborated with content area teacher leaders to design summer institutes for local school district low performing middle and high schools.
- ❖ Facilitated small group discussions within English/Language Arts content area.
- ❖ Presented literacy strategies through whole group demonstrations and small group interaction.
- ❖ Collected data in the form of teacher feedback and reflections, surveys, videos, class observations, and individual meetings.

Conference Presentations and Professional Development

Bellacero, J., Brewer, M., Robbins, M., Vujaklija, A., Woodard, S., Zangerle, J. (2015). Online facilitation and support for National Writing Project Assignments Matter Task Jam. <http://assignmentsmatter.nwp.org>.

Nightengale, B., Putman, S., Vujaklija, A. (2015). Multiple sessions delivered and facilitated for Louisville Writing Project Technology Academy.
<http://lwptechliteracy.wikispaces.com>

Vujaklija, A. (2013). *Reading like a writer with picture books as mentor texts*. Professional Development Workshop delivered for Okolona Elementary, Louisville, KY.

Vujaklija, A. (2013). *What does a “short research project” look like?*. Conference Presentation at Louisville Writing Project fall mini-conference.

Vujaklija, A. (2013). *K-5 Going green! Engaging students in short research projects; 3-8 Claims & evidence; 6-12 Nutrition! Engaging students in short research projects; 5-12 Close reading strategies and writing about great speeches*. Professional Development Workshop Series delivered at Knott County, Kentucky.

Vujaklija, A. (2013). *Read like a writer: Integrating narrative reading and writing to produce powerful pieces (Maya Angelou); I-Search: Engaging students in authentic research; Read like a writer: Integrating narrative reading and writing to produce powerful pieces (There Come a Soldier)*. Professional Development

Workshop Series delivered at Kentucky Writing Project Common Core Academy in Brandenburg, Kentucky.

Vujaklija, A. (2013). *Research through inquiry, presentation, and reflection: Engage in actively brainstorming avenues for inquiry in your content areas*. Conference Presentation at Kentucky Council for Teachers of English (KCTE) annual conference.

Vujaklija, A. (2013). *Inquiry through I-search: Supporting students in meeting the new standards for research*. Conference presentation at Louisville Writing Project spring mini-conference.

Vujaklija, A. (2012). *There come a soldier: Reading like a writer*. Conference presentation at Kentucky Writing Project annual conference.

Vujaklija, A. (2012). *Speeches: Moving from listening to writing--How can we use Maya Angelou's words spoken at Coretta Scott King's funeral as a model for writing our own speeches?* Conference presentation at Kentucky Council for Teachers of English (KCTE) annual conference.

Vujaklija, A. (2012). *Research and I-Search: Student Inquiry and Reflection*. Conference presentation at Louisville Writing Project spring mini-conference.

Community Service

St. John Parish Council Representative	August 2013 – May 2015
St. John Sunday Children's Gather Teacher grades K-4	Aug 2012 – May 2015
St. John Religious Education Instructor grades 8-12	Aug 2009 – May 2015
St. Romuald Religious Education Instructor grade 3	Aug 2006 – May 2008

Professional Memberships

Illinois Writing Project (IWP)
Kentucky Writing Project Network (KWP)
National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
Kentucky Council of Teachers of English/Language Arts (KCTE/LA)
Kentucky Reading Association (KRA)

Research Interests

Narrative inquiry methods
Reflective inquiry within professional development planning
Effective professional development
Adolescent literacy and motivation
Literacy in the content areas